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MRS. E. A. SETON

FOUNDRESS AND FIRST SUPERIOR OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

IN THE UNITED STATES

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LIFE OF MRS. ELIZA A. SETON,

FOUNDRESS AND FIRST SUPERIOR

OF THE

Sisters or Daughters of Charity

IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;

WITH

CURIOUS EXTRACTS FROM HER WRITINGS, AND AN HISTORICAL
SKETCH OF THE SISTERHOOD FROM ITS FOUNDATION
TO THE TIME OF HER DEATH.

BY

CHARLES I. WHITE, D.D.

TO WHICH IS ADDED AN APPENDIX CONTAINING A SUMMARY
OF THE HISTORY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY
TO THE YEAR 1870.

"Her children rose up and called her blessed."—Prov. xxii, 28.

THIRD EDITION.

BALTIMORE:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN D. PIET,
LATE KELLY, PIET & Co.

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Bright fund

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TO
The Daughters of Charity

IN
THE UNITED STATES,
WHO WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THEIR
Distinguished Foundress,
IMITATORS OF HER VIRTUES,
AND CONTINUATORS OF THE HOLY WORK WHICH SHE COMMENCED,

This Volume
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THIS volume originally appeared in the year 1853. It met with such a cordial reception that the first edition was soon exhausted.

In compliance with the repeated solicitations of friends, the author revised his work, and omitted some passages for the purpose chiefly of reducing its bulk and bringing it more generally within the reach of purchasers. The second edition, thus improved, was published in 1856, and sold so rapidly that it has been out of print for some time.

The demand for the book continues, but the author is no longer here to prepare the third edition. On the 1st of April, 1878, he was called to his reward, leaving behind him the memory of a learned, virtuous and zealous priest.

Besides what was in the second edition, the present volume contains, in an appendix, a summary of the history of the Sisters of Charity since the death of the venerated Foundress of the Order, and the general statistics of the Province of the United States for the year 1878. Thus supplemented, the "Life of Mother Seton" is again presented to the public.

THE PUBLISHERS.

FRAST OF THE PURIFICATION, 1879.

NOV 21 1891

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

EXTRACT

FROM THE

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

It cannot be denied that the memory of Mrs. Seton is justly deserving of public record. The eminent qualities with which nature had endowed her, enhanced as they were by study and reflection,—her peculiarly religious temperament and strict fidelity in discharging the various duties of social and domestic life, although living amid the distracting and enervating influences of the *beau monde*,—the remarkable circumstance of her conversion to the Catholic faith, in defiance of the most formidable obstacles that could be thrown in the way,—lastly, the extraordinary design of Providence, by which she became the institutrix and first superior of a society whose members are now spread over every portion of the United States, for the honor of religion, the instruction of youth, and the relief of suffering humanity,—are considerations which appeared long since to require a more extended notice of her than had yet been given to the public. There are few stations in life affording an opportunity for the exercise of female usefulness that she did not adorn by her virtues. In the various relations of daughter, wife, and mother, she may be advantageously proposed as a model. In the ordeal which she was forced to encounter for the successful investigation of religious truth, and in the subsequent practice of the duties which it imposed, she displays an example which may not be unprofitable to those who are engaged in ex-

amining the doctrines of Catholicism, as well as to those who already believe them. In the third place, her renunciation of the world for Christ's sake, and her zealous efforts to form and mature the admirable institution whose benevolent and heavenly influence is now so widely felt, offer a variety of edifying incidents interesting to all who rejoice at the triumphs of Christian faith, but especially to her spiritual daughters, who are the inheritors of her virtue and reap the blessings of her generous piety.

The information embodied in this volume relative to Mrs. Seton has been collected altogether from original and cotemporary papers, embracing the autograph letters and other writings of herself and those who corresponded with her, and from the manuscript of verbal statements respecting her and her family, and the Institution of the Sisters of Charity, furnished by numerous individuals who were intimately acquainted with her, and some of whom have witnessed the progress of the society which she founded from its origin to the present day.

In the construction of this narrative, I have quoted, whenever it was practicable, Mrs. Seton's own words, in order to render it as much as possible an autobiography, and thus present a more lifelike portraiture of her character.

In conclusion, I offer this volume to the public, with the hope that in rescuing from further oblivion or destruction the memorials of a personage who has rendered such important services to religion and society as Mrs. Seton, I may have contributed in some degree to the stock of useful literature, and done something toward promoting the cause of piety and general edification. These considerations, I trust, will claim for the imperfections of the work the indulgent criticism of the reader.

THE AUTHOR.

PIKESVILLE, Md. November 1, 1862.

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THE LIFE

OF

MRS. E. A. SETON.

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ELIZA ANN BAYLEY was born in the city of New York, on the 28th of August, 1774, nearly two years before the declaration of American independence. She was the younger of two daughters, the only children of Dr. Richard Bayley, by his first marriage with Catharine Charlton. Her parents were both Americans by birth, and of respectable standing in society. As the sequel will show, her father was a man of strong mind and liberal education, and rose by his genius and industry to an eminent rank in the medical pro-

fession.⁽¹⁾ Her mother was the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman, and a sister of Dr. Charlton, a much respected physician of the day. Miss Bayley had not yet completed her third year, when death deprived her of her maternal parent, whose vigilant and affectionate care was so desirable a protection at that tender age. She suffered this bereavement, however, too early to estimate the extent of her loss; and all her affections as she advanced in life became centred in her father. Upon him devolved entirely the guardianship of her youth and the subsequent care of her education—duties which engaged his earnest and unceasing attention. Though compelled, by the tender age of his daughter, to depend, in a great measure, on the fidelity of others for the attentions which her situation required, he never ceased to exercise an immediate and watchful superintendence over her welfare, and to evince at all times that affectionate solicitude which, however imperatively demanded by the absence of maternal care, was peculiarly congenial to his elevated and benevolent nature. The political troubles which at this period agitated the country, in its violent struggle for independence, was another consideration which tended to strengthen the bond between the parent and the child. Great Britain and the colonies were now at open war with each other, and the city of New York participated largely in the danger and confusion which such events naturally produce. The English troops having entered the town in 1776, retained possession of it for the space of seven years; soon after which the political horizon began to wear a brighter aspect. During this period of uncertainty and alarm, and until the cessation of hostilities, when the glorious star of freedom arose upon the American Confederacy, Miss Bayley was almost continually under the eye of her father, and conceived for him all the affection that a child can entertain for a parent. This unbounded

attachment she manifested in various ways. Frequently, when at school, she would learn her task quickly, repeat it, and then watch a favorable opportunity of eluding the vigilance of her preceptress, in order to run down the street to meet her father, who passed that way, embrace him, and then hasten back before the old lady could notice her absence. She not only regarded him as her protector, but, with that generous disposition which knows how to appreciate a benefit, she repaid his anxiety and kindness with the practice of every virtue that could gratify the paternal heart. Filial piety was the spring of all her actions—the incentive to all her exertions. Though incapable of understanding the importance of study at her tender age, she valued her scholastic exercises because prescribed by her father. "French and music must have their hours," said he. This was sufficient to recommend them, and to excite her diligent application. Such was the veneration and affection which she entertained for him, that on no one occasion was she ever known to oppose his will or disobey him in the slightest particular. Nor was this virtue unrewarded by Him who has promised a rich blessing to the dutiful and obedient child. Her future career will exhibit a striking verification of those words in the book of Ecclesiastics:—"Honor thy father in work and word, and all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end."²

With amiable qualities of heart Miss Bayley united talents of a superior order. Nature had endowed her with a quick and comprehensive mind, a sound judgment, and fertile imagination; and she was not inactive in availing herself of the best opportunities for the cultivation of her mental powers. At this time, America offered but slender

¹ Chap. III. 2.

resources for education in comparison with the facilities which are now enjoyed. The few seminaries of learning that had been established afforded but a very limited course of instruction, and even these were closed for several years during the stormy period of the Revolution. Under these circumstances, Miss Bayley was compelled to depend principally upon domestic tuition and study for the acquirement of the knowledge suited to her sex.

Happily she possessed, in the abilities of her father, a means of supplying the deficiency in the usual methods of instruction; and, under his direction, with a natural disposition for self-improvement, she applied herself, with considerable success, to the various branches of female education. Dr. Bayley, in the training of his children, looked much more to the formation of habits which would result in honorable usefulness in after-life, than to attainments of a less solid though more brilliant kind. His penetrating and observant mind easily perceived, as he remarks in one of his letters, that the American youth were naturally given to a spirit of independence, which, impatient of control, must become, for many, a by-way to certain vexation and disappointment. Convinced that a "brilliant character is not always a solid character," he diligently impressed upon the minds of those under his charge the necessity of self-restraint, reflection, and curtailment of pleasure, as the only means, however disagreeable at first, of reaping the sweet fruits of happiness in maturer years. These lessons of wisdom were carefully reduced to practice by his younger daughter; and to the due and assiduous exercise of self-restraint may be attributed, in a great measure, her subsequent triumph over the series of trials and difficulties which she had to encounter in pursuing the course marked out for her by divine Providence.

While this disposition contributed vastly to preserve her

mind and heart from the contamination of worldly maxims, it encouraged that inclination to piety which was observable in her from her earliest youth.* Following the example of those around her, she frequented the Protestant Episcopal Church, in which she had been baptized and admitted to what the members of that denomination term the ordinance of confirmation. The religion of Miss Bayley, however, did not partake of that ultra Protestant spirit which rejects every practice that savors in the least of Catholic piety. She wore on her person a small crucifix—the emblem of man's redemption—and was often heard to express her astonishment that this custom was not more prevalent among persons of her own communion. Bigotry and prejudice seem to have found no admittance into her mind. Conscientiously attached to her own religious views, she knew how to respect the convictions of her neighbor, and even to admire among them the existence of certain institutions which were unknown among the professors of her own particular creed.† One of the principal occupations that afforded her pleasure was the reading of the Holy Scrip-

* When we speak of the piety or religious spirit of Miss Bayley, we mean simply that she was a devout worshipper of God according to her views of religion; but we do not pretend to say whether, or how far, her interior dispositions were acceptable to him. Though piety, in the proper acceptation of the term, can be found, in its full and explicit form, only among those who belong to the external communion of the Church, it is not impossible for it to exist implicitly, in some cases, out of that external communion; for instance, among young persons who, though born of heterodox parents, have been validly baptized, and have never renounced the disposition then received to be governed by the teaching of their legitimate pastors. See Catholic theologians *passim*.

† In the course of her reading she occasionally met with descriptions of convents, and regretted that such establishments were not to be found among Protestants. It is a curious fact, that the early admiration of this youthful Episcopalian for the conventual life resulted in her becoming herself, at a later period, the foundress of a similar institution.

tures. From the sublime instructions imparted by the sacred penmen, she derived the most salutary knowledge for the regulation of her sentiments and actions. The papers which she has left afford ample evidence that she took delight in transcribing comments and reflections upon different portions of the sacred volume, and that she had become familiar with its contents, especially the Book of Psalms. The fervent effusions of the inspired bard were peculiarly congenial to her naturally ardent temperament; and she frequently quoted passages from them in her letters and other writings. To this practice, and to her natural rectitude and strength of mind, we may attribute the remarkable self-control which she exhibited in her intercourse with society. Surrounded by all the charms of gay and fashionable life, Miss Bayley did not allow herself to be dazzled by brilliant appearances. From a written exposition of her thoughts and dispositions, as they manifested themselves to her on a Sunday evening, when she reviewed the manner in which the day had been passed, it is plain that she scrutinised her actions with a singular penetration, and according to a standard of excellence which is rarely held in view by young ladies who possess every facility for mingling in the amusements and dissipation of the world. After tracing the vagaries of her mind during the course of the day, and the distractions which she had met with at her devotions, which were partly caused by the attentions of a gentleman who at that time had a prospect of her hand in marriage, she examines in what manner her time should have been distributed; reflecting that she might have turned it to greater profit, if it had been devoted more particularly to retirement and prayer. "The consequences would have been," she adds, "I would have been pleased with myself; M—— would have been pleased with me; even they to whom the sacrifice was made would have liked

me better; and, the heavenly consideration, my God would have blessed me."

We shall furnish another extract from this self-examination, written at the age of eighteen, which will show how much importance she attached to the proper disciplining of her mind and actions, not merely with a view to follow the dictates of reason, but from motives of religion. Considering that she possessed a very lively disposition, we shall be inclined to think that the imperfection of which she speaks was comparatively of little moment, though she deemed it worthy of serious attention. "There is a certain temper I am sometimes subject to—it is not sullenness or absolute discontent, 'tis a kind of melancholy; still, I like it better than those effusions of cheerfulness, that hilarity of spirits, which a good night's rest and a fine morning often inspire. I prefer the sadness, because I know it may be removed; it may change to cheerfulness. The gayety, I am sure, will change to sadness before the day ends, and perhaps to sorrow; 'tis not the natural temper, but the influence of situation. I trust the day will come when I may show a more regular and Christian disposition. Perhaps it may; it may not. Those passions must be governed. I have a most unaccountable wish to see E—— this morning, but I will not go a step out of my way. If fortune should so direct, I think I should be very grateful; if not, I will try and think that 'tis best."

With this command over herself, and a constant eye to the cultivation of the most elevated principles of conduct, Miss Bayley had shielded herself effectually against a danger which is too often incurred before its consequences are foreseen,—that of forming injudiciously a matrimonial alliance. A matter bearing so closely upon her happiness, and involving so much responsibility, received from her virtuous and penetrating mind all the consideration which it merited.

On the other hand, the excellence of character which she aimed at could not fail to be appreciated by virtuous and discerning minds, and to aid materially in effecting a union which would contribute to her earthly happiness. In her personal appearance, Miss Bayley was of rather low stature, but her figure was well proportioned and her movements graceful. A perfect symmetry was displayed in her features, which, with the sparkling yet mild expression of her eye, rendered her countenance the mirror of a noble and intelligent soul. Possessing an uncommon degree of vivacity and cheerfulness, she used it with tact and moderation, for the charm of those around her. In the twentieth year of her age, she accepted the hand of Mr. William Seton, a highly respectable merchant in the city of New York. He was a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and a gentleman of amiable disposition and engaging manners. His family enjoyed the highest character and standing.¹⁰ A portion of his early life he had spent in a mercantile house at Leghorn—a circumstance which the subsequent history of his wife will show to have been a dispensation of divine Providence for the spiritual benefit of herself, her family, and the innumerable souls who would be led by her example into the way of salvation. At this period, however, she little imagined that her religious views would ever be exchanged for the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Her early education, and the recent connection she had formed with a strictly Episcopalian family, both wedded her to the Protestant system, and it may be truly said that she was a rigid observer of its principles and forms.

At the time of her marriage, Mrs. Seton beheld a prospect of the most flattering description before her. Her husband's affairs were in a flourishing condition, and, surrounded as she was by a numerous circle of admiring friends, she had

reason to expect, from the new alliance she had formed, every temporal happiness that can be realized on this side of the grave. Divine Providence, however, did not permit her to be dazzled by the fair scenes of enjoyment around her. The ordeal which he had in reserve for her at a later period of life demanded a thorough training of her mind and heart, and could be met successfully only by one who had learned the practice of patience and resignation under the trying dispensations of Heaven, and had the moral energy to set aside the vain considerations of this earth whenever conflicting with the higher interests of an immortal life. We accordingly find her on all occasions deeply impressed with the truth of an all-wise and overruling Providence, and possessing a lively sense of the duty of submission to the afflictions of life. The first year of her marriage, in the summer of 1794, Mr. Seton's business having called him to Philadelphia, where the yellow fever had made its appearance, she writes to him in a strain of affectionate solicitude, not a little increased by the apprehension of the danger to which he was exposed; but her fears do not degenerate into excess; she moderates them, and sustains her fortitude by the reflection that "patience and submission are the only way to gain the blessings of Heaven." In a letter to one of her relations, to whom she was united by the closest ties of friendship, she furnishes another evidence of the supernatural view which she was accustomed to take of passing occurrences, while she exhibits, at the same time, the self-control and wisdom which she exercised in the correspondence with her friends. "I received your letter of the 22d September. Although I make it a rule never to answer letters while under the influence of the first impressions I receive from them, I cannot refrain from immediately replying to it—and it is not a very easy task to preserve my usual sincerity with you; but

I believe even that is best, for my mind is in a state of anxiety and distress which does not admit of any calculations respecting the enjoyments of this life. In one short week, sisters, friends, and the whole world, may be nothing to me. There never passes a day but some family is deprived of its support, children of their parents, and the wife of her husband, even in the number of my acquaintance. My William goes every day to town,* and is more exposed than many who have lost their lives; that he should escape depends on that mercy which has never yet failed, and which I have reason to bless every hour of my life." On another occasion, addressing the same friend, whose society she loved to enjoy, she displayed a spirit of faith and resignation which is seldom witnessed in the intercourse of persons blessed with every worldly comfort. She observes, "We are not always to have what we like best in this world, thank Heaven! for, if we had, how soon we should forget the other, the place of endless peace, where they who were united by virtue and affection here will surely enjoy that union so often interrupted while on their journey home!" The expression of these sentiments was not a casual thing with Mrs. Seton, or the effect of circumstances that awakened in her bosom an occasional outburst of religious feeling; it was at all times the image of her mind and heart, the result of an habitual attention to the cultivation of the highest principles of moral conduct. Hers was one of those favored souls that are borne up by their own natural impulses to the love and pursuit of what is right; and this disposition, aided by study and reflection, gave to her sentiments and aspirations a tone of uncommon purity and virtue, which manifested itself in all her writings. Her

* She writes from Craigdon, a seat in the country, October, 1798, the yellow fever prevailing at the time in New York City, and causing the ravages which she describes.

mind was of a superior order, but it was not less prone to the indulgence of pious meditation than it was active and intelligent. Those hours which she could snatch from her domestic and social duties were frequently employed in communing with God, in the perusal of the Holy Scriptures, and in meditating upon the sublime truths of the Christian religion. Hence her invariable practice of throwing into her letters and notes some allusion to the great maxims of evangelical morality. If she adverted to the prosperous and joyful scenes of life, they caused her heart to expand in gratitude, and reminded her of more perfect and more lasting enjoyments in a future world. If adversity was the theme of her remarks, it turned her thoughts upon the only true remedy of earthly trials, the happy exchange of transient suffering for eternal felicity. The following extract from her devotions, in the year 1798, may serve as a specimen of the prayers which she addressed to God:—

"Almighty Giver of all mercies! Father of all, who knowest my heart and pitiest its weakness and errors, thou knowest the desire of my soul is to do thy will; it struggles to wing its flight to thee, its Creator, and sinks again in sorrow for that imperfection which draws it back again to earth. How long shall I contend with sin and mortality? When will that hour arrive which will free the troubled spirit from its prison, and change the shadows of this life for immortality and endless happiness? I bow to thee, my God! in cheerful hope that, confiding in thy infinite mercy and assisted by thy powerful grace, I shall soon arrive to that hour of unspeakable joy. But if it is thy will the spirit shall yet contend with its dust, assist me to conduct myself through this life as not to render it an enemy, but a conductor to that happy state where all mortal contentions are done away, and where thy eternal presence will bestow eternal felicity."

In the subjoined prayer she pours forth her gratitude to God for the protection vouchsafed to her and hers while so many others were carried off by the stroke of death. She most probably alludes to the ravages of the yellow fever. The noblest return is made for the favors of Heaven, in an increased determination to walk in the path of the divine commandments.

"With pity, O Lord, look down upon thy servant. Thy mercy is boundless; thou hast preserved our souls from death while thousands fall around us. Thou hast given us every good while others are visited with sorrows and afflictions; and shall not my soul praise thee for this unmerited goodness? Shall it now fall into sin and neglect of thee, its preserver? Will it rather suffer the bondage of sin than be thy servant? Oh, how it pants, it longs to fit itself for thy acceptance; but, chained in the service of the enemy, it falls from its native glory and grovels in the dust. Let thy mercy assist the endeavor of thy servant; grant but the smallest portion of thy grace, and I shall be free. O Almighty Father! O Blessed Spirit, comforter of the sick and sorrowing soul! O Saviour eternal, Redeemer of sinners, who gavest thy life to save us, assist a miserable sinner who strives with corruption of sin, and desires above all things to break the snares of the enemy. I am, O Lord! like one in the net of the fowler; set me now at liberty; cleanse me and fit me for thy presence, and the soul that now sorrows shall rejoice."

Mrs. Seton had so assiduously cultivated the sentiments contained in the foregoing addresses to the Throne of Grace, that she seems never to have laid them aside for other convictions, though it must be admitted that her Christian principles were at one time much exposed to be shaken by the familiar acquaintance which she had formed with the works of the French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

In the year 1700 she became so enamored of his writings, that, as she expresses it herself, every half hour she could catch went to Emilius. She was particularly pleased with his religious views. Voltaire's writings were also partially known to her; and it may be safely affirmed that without the special protection of divine Providence her mind would have become deeply infected with the fatal errors of those pestilential authors, who insinuate the poison of irreligion with a brilliancy of thought and charm of language that have too often unhappily seduced the incautious reader. But Mrs. Seton's admiration of Rousseau appears to have extended chiefly, if not altogether, to those parts of his works which pay a forced but not less eloquent tribute to revealed truth. At all events, if her religious views were in any degree affected by the withering opinions of infidelity, she must have remained in this state of mind for a very short time; as her writings, subsequent to the period of which we speak, breathe a spirit of Christian piety equal to, if not more fervent than, that of her previous life. On the 31st of December, in the same year, we find her indulging in a religious meditation, of which she has left us a succinct but beautiful account. She thus describes the situation of her body and mind on the last day of the expiring year: "Sitting on a little bench before the fire, the head resting on the hand, the body perfectly easy, the eyes closed, the mind serene, contemplating and tracing boundless mercy and the source of all excellence and perfection—how pure the enjoyment, and sweet the transition of every thought! The soul expands, all earthly interests recede, and heavenly hopes become anxious wishes. Might not these mortal bonds be gently severed—loosed more easily than untying the fastening of a fine thread—at this moment, without any perceptible change, to find the soul at liberty, Heavenly Mercy! in thy presence? And would it

not tremble, or rather is it not forever under thy inspection? Can it be concealed from thee? No; thou now perceivest it oppressed, weighed, sinking under its mortal burden; and also thou seest it can patiently submit to thy will, adoring in surest confidence of thy mercy. Preserve me but this heavenly peace; continue to me this privilege, beyond all mortal computation, of resting in thee and adoring thee, my Father, Friend, and never-failing support. For this alone I implore: let all other concerns, with their consequences, be entirely and wholly submitted to thee."*

It might be supposed, from the religious tone which Mrs. Seton introduced into her letters, that she had fallen into the use of that disagreeable cant and rigid formalism that almost invariably distinguish the devotee who is not enlightened by the true faith. This, however, was far from being the case. The religion of Mrs. Seton was not of an obtrusive or sullen nature. Possessing a singular vivacity of disposition, and an equal sense of propriety, she knew how to accommodate herself to circumstances. If, on suitable occasions, in corresponding with her friends, she deemed it advisable to indulge a strain of serious thought, or to mingle with commonplace matters a well-turned allusion to maxims of moral guidance, at other times she pursued a different course, adopting the vein of humor to which she was particularly inclined. She thus writes to her father, who was at Albany, in February, 1790: "Should you be, in your retirement, unoccupied by the cares and solitudes that generally accompany you, a letter from your daughter will be very acceptable; if otherwise, it will be read in haste, and the idea, 'Bett is a goose,' will pass your mind. I send it to take its chance, hoping, as the children say, it may find

* In looking over this manuscript, after she had become a Catholic when her piety was the result of better light and knowledge, she exclaimed, "Oh, how different now! Oh, praise and eternal gratitude!

you well, as I am the same. It is currently reported that you are gone to New London to inquire into the origin of the fever, and that you are to proceed to Boston to see your children. But I hope you will very soon return, and convince the ladies who chatter on the subject that the origin is not the object of your pursuit, but the remedy."

Some months later, she addresses her father in the following language, which exhibits the sprightliness of her disposition, and, at the same time, establishes her claim to considerable merit in the epistolary style: "My very dear Mr. Monitor: That you are in the enjoyment of health in the midst of dangers, toil, and death, is a subject of high exultation to me; and if the prayers of a good, quiet little female are supposed to be of any avail, it will be long continued to you, with the hope that the visual rays of our fellow-citizens will in time be brightened by your labors, and their attention awakened by the voice of truth and conscience. I had the pleasure to hear a Mr. Delmea, a French physician, refer a number of strangers, both French and English, to a publication, called the *Monitor*,* as the best thing written on the subject of yellow fever, and as the only one that points out its true cause and origin. He said he did not know who was the author, but he must be the best friend of humanity, and should be considered by the Americans as their best adviser. I imagine my eyes were larger and blacker at that moment than usual. If you would sometimes direct Helen's† pen to Bloomingdale, it would be a most grateful substitute for your own, which I cannot expect to claim in this season of occupation."

The cheerfulness of Mrs. Seton's disposition, united with a profoundly religious sentiment, contributed much to sup

* Written by Dr. Bayley, father of Mrs. Seton. For this reason she addresses him at the commencement of this letter as "Mr. Monitor."

† A step-sister of Mrs. Seton.

port her under the trials which are the general attendants of domestic life, as well as those which may be termed the particular dispensations of Providence. About the beginning of the year 1800, her husband's temporal affairs had become very much embarrassed, owing to the French spoliations and the usual vicissitudes of mercantile life, and it seemed as if the tide of prosperity was soon to stop for him and his family. In the midst of these difficulties Mrs. Seton proved herself the devoted wife, by sharing the trials of her husband and exerting herself as far as she could to diminish the unhappy influence which such a situation is apt to exercise upon the mind. During an entire week, she spent most of the night in assisting her husband in arranging his papers. But the fortitude and resignation which she evinced under this dispensation of Providence are equally worthy of remark. She observed to a friend that it would never do for hearts and fortunes to sink together. When things had assumed the most unfavorable aspect, and one loss appeared only to be the harbinger of additional misfortunes, she knew how to possess her soul in patience and to trust in Him who directs all the events of life for the wisest ends. She did not suffer her mind to dwell on these topics, so far as they tended to disturb the peace of her soul, for she always found a source of consolation in the sentiments awakened by the practice of the Christian virtues. She thus speaks, in a letter to her sister-in-law, of Mr. Seton's difficulties: "How I wish I could write you a long letter, without saying one word of affairs, for in their present state they are too melancholy to think about, and that not from any impression I have received from my William, for never did a mortal bear misfortune and all the aggravated distress of it with so much firmness and patience as he does. I say aggravated, for vessel after vessel arrives, and correspondents in London and Hamburg notify him that his bills are refused, and his pro-

perty detained there, and not one line of explanation either good or bad; and here we are, with funds detained on one side the water and transferred the other, for he is obliged to make over every thing in trust to his friends, nothing coming in, and one suit already against him gives but too much reason to expect more; but it is all in vain to think about it: patience is the only choice."

The following prayer, which seems to relate to the same embarrassments, shows the strength of mind which she exhibited under the trials of her situation: "The cup that our Father has given us, shall we not drink it? O blessed Saviour! by the bitterness of thy pains we may estimate the force of thy love: we are sure of thy kindness and compassion: thou wouldst not willingly call on us to suffer: thou hast declared unto us that all things shall work together for our good, if we are faithful to thee, and therefore, if thou so ordainest it, welcome disappointment and poverty, welcome sickness and pain, welcome even shame and contempt and calumny. If this be a rough and thorny path, it is one which thou hast gone before us. Where we see thy footsteps, we cannot repine. Meanwhile, thou wilt support us with the consolation of thy grace, and even here thou canst more than compensate us for any temporal sufferings, by the possession of that peace which the world can neither give nor take away." July 25, 1801. While Mrs. Seton bowed with an humble submission to the trials she experienced, she did not neglect to turn the thoughts of her husband upon objects of greater moment than the things of this world. In a letter to him, after alluding to his business, she adds: "Excuse your saucy wife, who is too busy with your mercantile affairs. If I could have an influence in those I am really anxiously interested in, which relate to another cause, I should be too happy ever to vex you with what are the trifles of a day in comparison."

They who have ever felt the pressure of adversity will readily understand the happiness of a family that possessed a guiding spirit like Mrs. Seton, whose words were invariably those of comfort, and who never failed to discover in the higher considerations of religious truth a solace and compensation for the passing evils of life. In this way the burden of affliction was lightened, and every bosom became animated with brighter hopes.

At the period of which we are speaking, Mrs. Seton was the mother of four children:—Anna Maria, William, Richard, and Catharine Josephine. In the midst of this infant group, which presented to the parent's eye all that the fondest affection could desire, she found opportunities of exercising virtues which are equally essential and ornamental in the domestic circle. No love could exceed that of Mrs. Seton for the children whom Providence had confided to her care; but it was a love elevated and enhanced by the reflection that they constituted an important charge, for which she would be accountable to God. Hence, while she carefully watched over their temporal welfare, she was still more solicitous for the formation of their minds and hearts to the knowledge and esteem of virtuous principles. Not only did she teach their youthful lips to praise God and invoke his blessings; she availed herself of every opportunity to impress upon them this obligation, as well as the other duties of which they were capable. Sometimes she would send them little notes, in which the assurance of maternal affection would invariably be mingled with the words of salutary instruction, but conveyed in a form at once so natural and attractive that they could not fail to produce a most happy and lasting impression. Her tact in this respect was remarkable. In a note to her two boys on a certain occasion, after expressing her fond attachment for them, she wins them still more to her bosom, and to a regard for her wishes, by re-

joicing at the good news she has heard of them respecting their correct deportment and their attention to school; and, after having thus secured their favorable disposition to receive advice, she exhorts them to perseverance in good, to pray for their parents, to obey their superiors, and lastly urges them to the performance of their duties by proposing the highest motives of conduct, the prospect of enjoying the good-will of their parents and obtaining the blessing of the Almighty. On the birthday of her eldest daughter, she thus addresses her:—

“MY DEAR ANNA MARIA:

“This is your birthday, the day that I first held you in my arms. May God Almighty bless you, my child, and make you his child forever. Your mother's soul prays to him to lead you through this world, so that we may come to his heavenly kingdom in peace, through the merits of our blessed Saviour.

“May 3, 1803.”

No opportunity was neglected of imparting to her offspring the knowledge and the fear of God. The subjoined letter will show the ardent desire of Mrs. Seton for their virtuous training, as well as her peculiar skill in explaining to them the morality of the gospel:—

“My dearest Anna must remember that our blessed Lord gave us the parable of the wise and foolish virgins to make us careful to choose our part with the wise ones, and to keep in readiness for his coming, which will be in an hour we know not of; and should he find us, dear child, out of the road of our duty, like sheep gone astray from their shepherd, where shall we hide from his presence who can see through the darkest shadow and bring us from the farthest ends of

the world? If we would please him, and be found among his children, we must learn what our duty is, pray to him for grace to do it, and then set our whole heart and soul to perform it. And what is your duty, my dear child? You know it, and I pray God to keep you in it, that, in that blessed day when he shall come to call us to our heavenly home, we may see our dear Anna in the number of those dear children to whom he will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.'

Your own dear Mother."

From what has been said, we may readily infer that the affection of Mrs. Seton for her children, although ardent, was of that pure and elevated character which never allowed it to degenerate into weak condescension. Convinced of what the wise man teaches, that "the rod and reproof give wisdom, but the child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame,"* she did not fail in the important duty of correction, whenever circumstances seemed to require it. But this duty on her part was not the effect of excitement, which too often governs the parent on such occasions and destroys the efficacy of reproof. It was the dictate of reason and religion, which aimed only at the reformation of evil, and adopted the most effectual measures for the attainment of this end. From one of her letters to her sister-in-law, we learn a circumstance which indicates no ordinary degree of wisdom in the mother of a family. "I was busy," she says, "with poor Anna, in the garret closet, and afterward took her to the highest step of the ladder that leads to the top of the house, to make her feel that the promise she made to be good was before God, who knows all we say and do." Her experience had taught her that a solemn thought is greatly heightened by viewing the

* Prov. xxi. 18.

heavens in open space without an intervening object. By such means did the lessons of truth sink deeply into the hearts of her children, and strengthen, from day to day, their love and veneration for a parent who was so devoted to their real happiness.

Virtue, firm and enlightened as hers, could not but spread its perfume on every side. All within the sphere of her acquaintance felt its beneficial influence, while to some she was even a mother and instructress. She thus writes to one of her youthful relatives:—"Let your chief study be to acquaint yourself with God, because there is nothing greater than God, and because it is the only knowledge that can fill the heart with a peace and joy which nothing can disturb. Father of all beings, how extensive are thy mercies!—how great, how inexpressible! It is in thee we live, and move, and have our being. The lot of mortals is in thy hand; they are only happy through thee. Thy paternal cares are over all mankind. Thy impartial goodness causes the sun to shine and constant blessings to descend on those even who offend and disobey thee. By thy command the dew refreshes the earth and the zephyr cools and revives us; thy gifts are proportioned to the wants of thy creatures, but the righteous alone feel the sweet and salutary effects of thy peace. O thou who possessest sovereign power, and givest life and enjoyment to the poorest insect, which could not exist a moment but by thy will, permit thy creature to praise and bless thee, and let me forever adore thy goodness and give my soul to thy service. Blessed Saviour, who gavest thy life for us, and hast done every thing to engage our love and gratitude, oh let me never be so unhappy as to offend or disobey thee wilfully. Blessed Shepherd of them that seek thee, oh keep me in thy fold—lead me in thy paths; let me always hear and love thy voice, and follow thee as a meek and quiet lamb, making it the care of my life to keep near to my

blessed Master; and if ever I should lose my way, or for a moment be so unhappy as to disobey thy commands, oh, call thy wanderer home."

She furnished the same individual with a method of morning and evening prayer. In the former, thanks are returned to God for the favors of the night, and his blessing is implored for the day; in the latter, the graces of Heaven are again acknowledged, and the divine mercy invoked upon herself, her friends, and relations.

One of her sisters-in-law, having received some prayers from her on her birthday, which were sent by Mrs. Seton as a friendly counsel to prepare herself for a happy death, seemed to misunderstand the act of kindness, imagining that it required her to indulge in a train of melancholy thought. Mrs. Seton very justly remarked to her that these reflections tended to tranquillize the mind of a Christian. "Should we make a practice," she says, "of considering, with calm and dispassionate meditation, that that hour must come to all, whether they reflect or not—its uncertainty with respect to time—the pains, weakness, and often extreme anguish our parting nature must experience, and, what is still worse, the possibility that we may be summoned without any warning at all,—it would be taking no more precaution than we would allow to the commonest events of life, if we were to allow our souls a few minutes every day, to beg for mercy and grace in that momentous hour. . . . I have observed that any good resolutions or exercises begun on the period of our birth are more seriously impressed; and I chose this for you at this time, as reflecting on a birthday on earth more easily transfers our thoughts to the birthday of our future existence; and it is very useful to make use of that day, from year to year, to examine our soul's account in full—on the progress we have made in approaching that heavenly example of perfection," &c. This extract from Mrs. Seton's

letters displays a degree of wisdom rarely met with in the world, and shows how she availed herself of certain occasions to diffuse among others that virtue which she practised herself. In the following advice to another relative we have an equally remarkable instance of the store she set upon firmness of principle. She tells her "not to leave home, on any persuasion, on Sacrament Sunday, and to say openly, whoever may request it, 'that it is her rule.' It can never," she continues, "be a breach of civility, or seem unkind, even to a sister or the dearest friend, if you say it with the firmness of one who has been at *His table* who refreshes and strengthens the soul in well-doing. I have often asked myself the question,—why should any one be more earnest in prevailing with me for a trifle, or a thing of no consequence in itself, than I in maintaining the thing I know to be right and that touches the interest of my soul's peace?" Such was her unflinching adherence to rules of moral guidance, which she could the more confidently recommend to others as she observed it faithfully herself.

Mrs. Seton did not confine her charity to the administering of good advice; she went abroad to dispense comfort and relief among the victims of misfortune. She was an active member of the "Widows' Society in New York,"—the benevolent object of which is indicated by its name; and such was her devotedness to the service of the poor, that she and one of her relatives, who was commonly associated with her on errands of mercy, were called Protestant Sisters of Charity. They not only visited those who were in want, but labored with their hands to increase their means of rendering assistance. Her benevolent efforts in behalf of the afflicted are thus described by one who was intimately acquainted with her at the time:—"Not satisfied with a formal profession without the love of God in her soul, she considered no sacrifice too great to promote the glory of her

heavenly Parent, and add to the felicity and happiness of her fellow-creatures. How often and with what delight has she explored the abodes of wretchedness, to administer temporal and spiritual comfort! How many tears of joy has she caused to flow! How many prayers have been raised to Heaven for her welfare! How often have the widow and the fatherless blessed her!"

A strict member of the Episcopal Church, she united in the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, as it is called, as often as she had an opportunity, and with an ardor and enthusiasm not frequently witnessed among Protestants. She thus describes the sentiments with which she communicated at the bedside of a dying friend, Sept. 13, 1802:—"Was called on by a sufferer, to help her in preparing her soul, which seemed on the point of departure to answer the call of its Creator. Her body, which had been long in the struggles of nature, now relieved from pain, had the foretaste of its rest, and left her soul at liberty to seek the strength of the Redeemer, and to desire the refreshment he has provided for sick and troubled spirits. These hands prepared the blessed table, while my soul and that of my soul's sister united with hers in joyful praise for our precious privilege—the purchase of redeeming love. The chosen, blessed, ministering servant bids us to the feast, gives it to the departing soul as its passport to its home—to me as the seal of that covenant which I trust will not be broken in life nor in death, in time nor eternity. Sweet, sweet communion of souls! Gracious Lord, may it be endless as thy mercy! may it be perfected in thee, sustained in thy truth, and sanctified by thy Spirit, that, growing in thy likeness and raised up in thine image, we shall be one with thee eternally!" Alluding to the same circumstance, she says:—"This day, I trust, is noted for me in the book of life, and oh that the blessings received, and the precious privileges I have

enjoyed in it, may be the incitement to a faithful discharge, through divine grace, of every duty which my dear and gracious Master may give me to perform, that it may make me his own, in thought, word, and deed, forever—leading me to the Supreme Good—the blessing of losing myself and all things in him." It is related of Mrs. Seton, that such was the profound awe awakened in her by the communion, that in receiving it her teeth clattered against the cup which contained the elements. Her whole mind was intently riveted upon the act she was performing, endeavoring to think of our Saviour's presence. Such was her fervor in complying with this rite, that after the service she would obtain from the sexton a further portion of the elements, and even go from one church to another, in order to repeat this religious act. She envied the happiness of the Catholic who believed in a real presence. The rite of baptism also inspired her with an extraordinary devotion. Her fifth child, born on the 20th of August, 1802, was presented at the regenerating font on the feast of St. Michael, and received the name of Rebecca. On the same day, Mrs. Seton committed to paper the sentiments that arose in her mind on the occasion, and we place them before the reader as a model for the Christian parent.

"*Wednesday, St. Michael's day, 1802.*—This day my little Rebecca is received into the ark of our Lord. She has been blessed by the prayer of faith, that she may receive the fulness of his grace, and remain in the number of his faithful children; that, being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, she may pass through the waves of this troublesome world, that finally she may enter the land of everlasting life. Glory! glory! glory be to Him, who has obtained for his servant these inestimable privileges—to enter into covenant with him—to commune

with his Spirit—to receive the blessing of our reconciled Father—inheritors in his kingdom of blessedness. Blessed Lord, can we be forgetful of our duty to thee—to thee who hast purchased all for us? Oh strengthen us, pity our weakness, be merciful to us, and, as thy holy angels always do thee service in heaven, give us grace to serve thee so faithfully while on earth that we may hereafter be received into their blessed society, and join their everlasting alleluiahs in thy eternal kingdom. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.”

The letters and other writings of Mrs. Seton afford many other evidences of the zeal with which she pursued the religion in which she had been educated; but we have said enough to render it unquestionable that she was a fervent and practical advocate of piety, according to her own understanding of the subject, and inculcated both by word and example those high principles of morality which made her a shining member of the church to which she belonged and a bright ornament in the social and domestic circle. To acquire this character was the object which she continually proposed to herself; and we cannot better describe than in her own words the efforts which she made to improve herself in all the qualities that constitute an honorable character and useful life. In a letter to a distant friend, she says:—“Nor can I ever lament the season of youth, for that of middle age is much more desirable, and lasts much longer, particularly if, it prepares the way to honorable old age, and accumulates such materials as will make that happy. All my leisure hours have that aim; and if the point anticipated

is never reached, it certainly fulfils the present moments to the best advantage, and if their memory remains, it will be a source of the greatest pleasure.”

The preceding part of Mrs. Seton's history embraces particularly those facts which exhibit her personal worth as a wife, the mother of a family, and a member of society in general; but the close relations which she continued to maintain with her father, and the virtues which they called into action, are worthy of special remark, inasmuch as they contribute more fully to the portrayal of her character. The private worth and professional distinction of Dr. Bayley concurred to merit for him the warmest affection and profoundest respect of his children, while the valuable services which he rendered to the cause of science and humanity won for him a deserved celebrity in Europe as well as in America.

Having completed his studies in England, he commenced the practice of medicine in New York, and soon acquired distinction by his successful treatment of diseases and his skill in surgery. He was the first to discover the inflammatory nature of the croup,—on which he published a work,—was a member of the Medical Faculty of Columbia College from its commencement, and was one of the earliest promoters of the New York Dispensary. Having devoted particular attention to the investigation of yellow fever and its causes, during repeated ravages of this fearful scourge, he wrote a work on the subject, which is distinguished for its practical and sound observations. Appointed health-physician to the port of New York, he became chiefly instrumental in procuring the enactment of the state quarantine laws, and successfully contributed to obtain similar regulations from the general government.*

* For other details respecting Dr. Bayley, see *Thacher's American Medical Biography*.

While Dr. Bayley was pursuing a profession which, with his energetic mind and active habits, subjected him to the most arduous labors and exposed his life to the most imminent danger, he found some relief from his daily toils in the affectionate regard and accomplished society of his daughter. He had impressed upon the minds of his children, from their earliest youth, that the happiness of their father depended upon them; and the lesson was acted upon to his entire satisfaction by Mrs. Seton. We have seen how fondly she was attached to him in childhood. At a later period, when his occupations became more arduous and incessant, it was her constant aim to please him by evidences of filial attachment. Although he had married a second time—a circumstance often resulting in the disturbance of the harmonious relations between parent and child—she lost nothing of that fond affection which she had always entertained for him. In this she only corresponded to the tender love and solicitude which he evinced for her. Writing to her a short time before her marriage, he says: "Solicitous always, and on all occasions, to hear from you or to correspond with you, you find I do not omit any opportunity to promote that pleasure. Most of us are tinctured with a little of the selfish—yours is of that kind that you correspond chiefly with yourself. Now, I approve of that mode of correspondence, if you add a new stock of information and useful knowledge to your former acquisitions. In this case you have my permission to persevere. In such a case, and in all instances, believe me your affectionate friend and father."

Whether at home or abroad, Dr. Bayley possessed in the devotedness of his daughter a source of unmingled pleasure and most grateful relaxation. His humane and indefatigable attentions to the victims of disease were interrupted during the day only to seek a brief repose near the piano

where she presided with skilful hand; and when absent from home, in the prosecution of professional business, he was delighted with the intercourse which her letters enabled him to enjoy. The following extracts from their correspondence will show the affectionate regard, frankness of heart, and playful spirit, which contributed so much to the mutual gratification of the parent and the child. Suffering from indisposition, he thus writes to her at the commencement of the year:—"I must smile, although I cannot swallow but with difficulty. Confinement is so unusual a thing for me, that the novelty affords me the most solid satisfaction. No bustle—no feeling of pulses—no scolding nor being scolded at—thus retired as it were within myself, I have neither care, thought, or wish—not even to see you. Now, let us see how the matter stands. Suppose me entering your room, exclaiming, 'My dear daughter, I wish you a happy new year; Seton, how are you? I wish you a happy year.' 'Thank you, sir; I wish you a great many.' I assert, the foregoing is better transacted in idea, for the very reason that a pantomime is a more rational exhibition for an active mind to contemplate than the dull, commonplace, *sic ut* representation of a play. Thus I am situated; removed from the necessity of acting on the stage of the world, my mind furnishes me with all that is necessary. An inflammation in the throat, although troublesome to a degree, is not so painful as a swelling at the side of the face, with a tender tooth; but, as I am really confined, I would take that too, if it would rid your friend of it. Guard against the sudden changes of weather; never dwell on trifles; be mistress of yourself; then I am convinced you will always have the credit of acting well."

When on a visit to Albany, in the year 1800, Dr. Bayley received from his daughter the following expressions of her regard:—"New York, March 4.—My father, a little

faithful heart has been conversing with you this hour past, and I have engaged to copy from it a part of its contents—that it regrets your absence, is extremely anxious for your present safety, and will rejoice when you return. The post goes to-morrow; therefore there is no time to wait till the brain is in the humor of invention, and therefore you must receive the present communication from that source which is always ready when you are the person in question; and it has also a peculiar pleasure in conveying to you the intelligence that its friend, who was yesterday a sufferer, is well to-day.”

“March 12.—The heart of your Betty jumped for joy at sight of the letter that was to tell her of your safe arrival, that you were well, and in the midst of friends; and can it be that there is any charm in the visit to Albany to compensate for your absence from New York? Dear sir, indeed you mistook: it was but a momentary impression, which, I am sure, is before this time changed into the recollections of those *douleurs* without which every other gratification loses its charm with its novelty. That ever you should observe the distance of the belt from the chin.* It is true that very conspicuous points must attract attention: so far it is easy to imagine,—more so than that your mind should be in that pliant, happy mood to admit of amusement from transient objects. I wish it may long remain in the desirable state your letter left you in, like holiday to the child that has long been kept in school and harassed by the severity of its teacher. . . . I have been copying so many English letters, French letters, &c., that one eye is open, the other shut; therefore, dear Mr. Papa, I wish you a night of rest and myself the same. Your most devoted daughter,
E. A. SETON.”

* An allusion to some remark of her father.

The amiable qualities here depicted could not fail to secure a corresponding feeling in a parent of so generous a nature as Dr. Bayley. But, enhanced as they were by the noblest sentiments of virtue, they rendered his daughter an object of unbounded admiration in his eyes. Writing to him on one occasion, after indulging her usual vein of hilarity, she concludes her letter in the following beautiful strain:—“I have been reading of the High and Holy One who inhabits eternity, and selecting such passages as I wish to transmit to my daughter. How the world lessens and recedes! How calm and peaceable are hours spent in such solitude! They are marked down for useful purposes, and their memory remains. I close my evening employment with ‘orisons for thee.’ Peace be with my father.” To this elevation of soul and practical wisdom Mrs. Seton joined a degree of respectful submission to the wishes of her father, which was not less attractive in the eyes of a parent. Though circumstances would sometimes place him at a distance from her, she regarded him as present, and observed his counsels with the same exactitude as if he were a witness of her conduct. “Your spirit,” she tells him, “surrounds your child, who checks each word you would prevent and pursues every action that you would approve.” It is easy to conceive how truly such virtue was appreciated by Dr. Bayley, and how refreshing must have been its effects amid the laborious duties in which he was so actively engaged. In the discharge of his office as health physician to the port of New York, he passed much of his time at Staten Island, where vessels were detained at quarantine. Here the scenes of distress and suffering which occurred among the emigrants, who frequently arrived in considerable numbers, and which almost defy description, called into constant action the energetic benevolence of Dr. Bayley. While the yellow fever was raging on board of the infected

vessels, hurrying to the grave hundreds of unfortunate beings who had scarcely seen the light of day since they had embarked from home, and little infants were dying by scores as soon as admitted into the fresh air, or famishing at the mother's breast, unable to receive other nourishment or to find it, Dr. Bayley was everywhere seen among the sick and the dying—sometimes carrying the almost lifeless babes in his own arms, to place them in comfortable beds. To the countless numbers that came from foreign countries, and were suffering from the pestilence, he was a real father. In offices of humanity he never wearied, and every rising sun found him already two or three hours engaged in the work of charity. Although Mrs. Seton could not participate in the active philanthropy of her father, she did not lack the disposition to do all that she possibly could to assuage the sufferings of her fellow-beings. The language in which she alludes to their pitiable condition exhibits a heart filled with the most tender commiseration. Writing to her sister-in-law on this subject, she says:—"Rebecca, I cannot sleep; the dying and the dead possess my mind—babies perishing at the empty breast of the expiring mother. And this is not fancy, but the scene that surrounds me. Father says such was never known before; that there are actually twelve children that must die for mere want of sustenance, unable to take more than the breast, and, from the wretchedness of their parents, deprived of it, as they have lain ill for many days in the ship, without food, air, or changing. Merciful Father! oh, how readily would I give them each a turn of my child's treasure, if in my choice! But, Rebecca, they have a provider in heaven who will soothe the pangs of the suffering innocent." Such was the heartfelt sympathy with which she contemplated the misery of those around her, that she was tempted to wean her own child, in order to become a mother to the little ones whom sickness had deprived of

all parental assistance. But this her father would not permit, as her first duty regarded those who were more immediately under her charge. Her obligations in this respect allowed her comparative leisure in her retirement at Staten Island; and she did not fail to employ to the best advantage the moments which were left from her domestic avocations. One hour of the day was devoted to the gratification of her father, who found no more effectual relaxation from his arduous and perilous office than to listen to the sweet music of the piano; but to prayer and the reading of the holy Scriptures she appropriated much more time, and she experienced the purest joy in these exercises of Christian piety.* The following effusion, written at a season when the ravages of death were actively going on around her, will show the peace of mind which, under these circumstances, she derived from religious meditation, and her grateful sense for the favors vouchsafed to her and her family:—"Consider the blessings that are at His right hand for them that love him." I was awake from my sleep this morning with these sweet words still sounding in my ears—a bright sun and every blessing surrounding me. Often does the perishing body enjoy this happiness, while the soul is still imprisoned in the shades of darkness. This day it flies to Him, the merciful giver of those unspeakable blessings, without a fear or one drawback but the dread of that frailty returning which has so often sunk it in the depths of sorrow. Merciful Father, graciously save it from the worst of all misery,—that of offending its adored benefactor and friend. Praise the Lord,

* As an evidence of Mrs. Seton's admiration of piety, we will mention here that she was struck with the religious demeanor of the Irish emigrants who landed on Staten Island for the purpose of receiving medical aid. "The first thing these poor people did when they got their tents was to assemble on the grass, and all, kneeling, adored our Maker for the mercy; and every morning sun finds them repeating their praises."

oh my soul! Praise him, that the blessed impulse of grace may redound to thy own happiness and glory, for to him thy praise can add nothing; to thyself it is now the means of grace and comfort, and hereafter will be thy pleasure and joy through eternity."

But the period had arrived when Mrs. Seton was to experience one of the severest trials that could fall to her lot. Dr. Bayley, her father, was about to end a life of active usefulness, on the very spot and in the very cause where his labors had been so extensively beneficial to the medical profession and to humanity. In the discharge of his duty as health physician, in August, 1801, he directed the passengers and crew of an Irish emigrant vessel with ship fever to go on shore to the rooms and tents appointed for them, leaving their baggage behind. This was in the evening. Early the following morning, upon going to the hospital, he found that his orders had been disobeyed, and crew and passengers, men, women, and children, well, sick, and dying, with all their baggage, were huddled together in one apartment, where they had passed the night. Into this apartment, before it had been ventilated, he imprudently entered, and remained but a moment, being compelled to retire by the most deadly sickness at the stomach and intense pain in the head, which seized him immediately upon entering the room.* Returning home, he retired to his bed, from which he never rose. The anguish of his affectionate and devoted daughter, at this crisis, may be better imagined than described. All that the tenderest solicitude could suggest was done by her to relieve his sufferings. She watched continually at his side, and poured forth her fervent prayers to God for his welfare. In fact, the mercy of God was her only resource in these moments of deep affliction, and she invoked it in-

* Thatcher, *ibid.*

cessantly in behalf of her beloved parent. She thus expresses her sentiments on this occasion in a letter to a sister-in-law. "My own Rebecca's heart aches for me—but all in vain. The chance is so small, that hope is folly, except as we refer it to Him who can renew both body and soul in an instant. He cannot retain any nourishment or get rest for any length of time; knows his dear Betty, so as to express by his looks his pleasure at seeing her, and sometimes puts out his hand. Your poor sister's only refuge is the *Father that cannot be removed*. Oh! how sweet is such refuge in this hour!" Such was Mrs. Seton's trust in God, not only for the bodily relief of her father, but principally for the welfare of his soul. She knew that his religious ideas were too conformable to the principles of the then prevalent philosophy, and she feared, notwithstanding his great moral virtues, lest his salvation might be in danger. In the ardor of her love, and with full confidence in the infinite goodness of God, she endeavored to think of some sacrifice which could be offered to the Almighty as a pledge for the eternal happiness of her father's soul. At length she adopted the following expedient. Leaving her dying parent for a few moments, she went to the cradle where her infant child was sleeping, clasped it in her arms, and, going out on the piazza of the building, she there raised the little innocent babe toward heaven, and appealed to the divine compassion, saying, "O Jesus, my merciful Father and God! take this little innocent offering; I give it to thee with all my heart; take it, my Lord, but save my father's soul." It pleased divine Providence, however, not to deprive her of the child which she bore in her arms. It was reserved, with her other children, to be reared in the knowledge of the true faith, after she herself had been introduced into the one fold under one shepherd. On the seventh day of his sickness, about the 16th of August, Dr. Bayley expired, leaving be-

hind him a high character as a clinically-instructed physician, "an excellent and bold operator, a prompt practitioner, of rapid diagnosis and unhesitating decision. In demeanor a perfect gentleman, honest and chivalrously honorable; of perfect integrity, and little tolerant of obliquity in others; ever ready to serve the cause of his profession; inflexible in his attachments, invincible in his dislikes, and unbrooking of insult; in temper fiery, yet suddenly cool—a fault which he knew and regretted; thoroughly fearless; somewhat too strongly partial to certain patients, but withal charitable to a fault."* He was one of those characters that make warm friends and bitter enemies. His servants and dependants were much attached to him, and for several years after his death they were known to shed tears at the mention of his name.

With the ardent temperament of Mrs. Seton and her fond devotedness to her father, the bereavement which she suffered by his death would have produced the most disastrous results for her happiness, had she not been strengthened against all the vicissitudes of life by the steady cultivation of a spirit of submission to the decrees of Providence. This disposition enabled her to moderate her grief; and although she ever recalled the memory of Dr. Bayley with the profoundest sentiments of love and veneration, she did not forget that the Almighty had reserved for her, in the family around her, an ample field for the immediate exercise of her affectionate solicitude. It was her only remaining wish, after the interment of her distinguished parent, that she might be permitted after death to repose by his side. But this prayer was not granted: it was ordained in the counsels of Heaven that she herself should become a nucleus around which would be gathered the precious remains of her chil-

* Thacher, loc. cit.

dren and her spiritual daughters, who will not be separated from her in death after having been united in the bonds of charity during life.

After the demise of her father, Mrs. Seton seemed to grow more fervent in the practice of her religion. The extracts already furnished from her papers, some of which were posterior in date to the event just mentioned, clearly show that as she advanced in years the practice of piety engaged her deep and constant attention. We will here furnish one or two additional passages from her writings at this period, with a view to indicate the sentiments which animated her previously to the increased affliction which an all-wise Providence was preparing for her. On Sunday, the 28d of May, 1802, on which most probably she had communed, she thus expresses herself:—"This blessed day, my soul was first sensibly convinced of the blessing and practicability of an entire surrender of itself and all its faculties to God. It has been the *Lord's day* indeed to me—though many, many temptations to forget my heavenly possession, in his constant presence, have pressed upon me. But, blessed be my gracious Shepherd, in ~~this~~ last hour of his day I am at rest within his fold, sweetly refreshed with the waters of comfort which have flowed through the soul of his ministering servant." In the month of August, the same year, she formed the following resolutions, which evince a serious attention to the practice of the Christian maxims. "Solemnly in the presence of my Judge, I resolve, through his grace, to remember my infirmity and my sin; to keep the door of my lips; to consider the cause of sorrow for sin in myself and them whose souls are as dear to me as my own; to check and restrain all useless words; to deny myself and exercise that severity that I know is due to my sin; to judge myself thereby, trusting through mercy that I shall not be severely judged by my Lord." The following year, on the 9th of

March, she penned a beautiful act of thanksgiving to God, in which she alludes to the happy exchange of this life's shadows and pains for the glory and felicity of the next. "Oh let our souls praise thee, and our all be devoted to thy service; then at the last we shall praise thee day without night, rejoicing in thy eternal courts—by the light of thy celestial glories all our darkness, pains, and sorrows, will be forever dispersed—those clouds and griefs which now oppress and weigh down the souls of thy poor, erring creatures will be gone and remembered no more. Those thorns which now obstruct our path—those shades which now obscure the light of thy heavenly truth—all, all shall be done away, and give place to thy cheering presence, to the eternal, unchanging joys which thou hast in store for the souls of thy faithful servants." Thus did the good providence of God permit her to cherish the most fervent sentiments of religion, even in communion with the sect in which she had been educated, that her mind might be fortified against the influence of approaching tribulation, and particularly that her subsequent abjuration of error might be invested with a greater éclat, and exhibit more strikingly the riches of that mercy which calls the wandering sheep into the pastures of truth and eternal life. In the following book it will be seen how the Almighty prepared the way for this signal exercise of his infinite goodness.

BOOK II.

Mr. Seton's ill-health—Voyage to Italy, accompanied by his wife and eldest daughter—Mrs. Seton's sentiments—Her journal—Incidents on arriving at Leghorn—Description of the Lazaretto—Mrs. Seton's resignation and fortitude—The *Capitano*—Mr. Seton grows weaker—Quarantine precautions—Mrs. Seton's confidence in God—Comfort to her husband—His sufferings—The *Capitano*'s religion—Sentiments of Mr. Seton—Visitors at the Lazaretto—Incident of Mrs. Seton's youth—Reflections—Communion with home—Attentions to her husband—Devotions—Journey to Pisa—Devotedness of Mrs. Seton—Her husband's dispositions—His death—Energy and fortitude of his wife—What strangers thought of her—Attentions and sympathy from friends—Visit to Florence—Impressions.

EARLY in the spring of 1803, Mr. Seton's health, which had always been extremely delicate, seemed to be rapidly declining, and he was advised by his physicians to try the experiment of a sea-voyage for the purpose of reviving his sinking frame. A commercial intercourse had made him long and favorably known to the Messrs. Filiechi, distinguished merchants at Leghorn, which determined him to visit the genial clime of that country, and to renew an acquaintance which he had formed with it in his earlier years. With a view to afford her suffering husband every attention that his situation required, Mrs. Seton resolved to accompany him, and immediately set about the necessary preparations for the voyage, confiding to her relatives the care of her younger children, and selecting her eldest daughter, Anna Maria, then in her ninth year, as a companion during her travels. The severe trial which carried Mrs. Seton from home, and the fearful uncertainty which yet hung over the issue of the journey, were well calculated to plunge her into the deepest sorrow; but her confidence in God and resigna-

tion to his divine will sustained her courage and composed her mind for every affair that demanded attention. We may form some idea of her sentiments at this period from the following lines written to one of her nearest friends:—"My dear, dear Eliza, your tenderness and affection calls me back; for often, often, with all I have to do, I forget I am here.) The cloud that would overpower can only be borne by striving to get above it.) Seton has had new and severe suffering since I saw you; all say it is presumption, and next to madness, to undertake our voyage; but you know we reason differently. Saturday is now the day; every thing is ready and on board. We will, dear Eliza, rest upon Him, our only strength, and my soul is thankful, for surely, with all the many calls we have to resign our hopes in this life, we naturally without one lingering pain must seek our rest above. Can it be that we will be there to separate no more? With the strong and ardent faith with which I receive and dwell on this promise, all is well and resting on the mercy of God. May he bless you as my soul blesses you, and raise you above the sorrows and pains with which your soul has so long struggled! Dear, dear Eliza, my heart trembles within me, and I can only say, take my darlings often in your arms, and do not let the remembrance of any thing I have ever done that has vexed you come twice to your thoughts.) I know it will not; but it seems now to me like my last hour with all that I love."

To a youthful and beloved relative, in whose welfare she took a particular interest, Mrs. Seton addressed the following parting advice:—"Although I leave you in the hands of your dearest friends, and under the protecting care of our dear and Heavenly Father, still my heart would dictate to you many anxious requests respecting your habitual observance of that heavenly Christian life you have so early begun; and in order to persevere in this, your first atten-

tion must be to make to yourself a few particular rules, which you must not suffer any thing on earth to divert you from, as they relate immediately to your sacred duty to your God; and, if you find that there are any obstacles in your way—and doubtless you will find many, as every Christian does in the fulfilment of their duty,—still persevere with yet more earnestness, and rejoice to bear your share in the cross, which is our passport and seal to the kingdom of our Redeemer. Nor will your steadiness of conduct ever injure you even in the minds of those who act differently from you, for all who love you will respect and esteem you the more for persevering in what you know to be your duty. And may the Divine Spirit strengthen your soul in his service, and make your way plain before you, that whatever are the changes in this our mortal life, we may find our rest in that blessed fold, where dear friends will no more be separated, but perfect the virtues and affections which have united them here, by the crown of immortal life and glory."

The day after writing this note, October 2d, the voyagers had reached the quarantine port of New York on their way to Italy. Mr. Seton already experienced the salutary effects of a change of air, and as to his wife, she thus expressed her feelings on leaving home:—"My heart is lifted, feels its treasure, and the little cabin and my cross are objects of peace and sweet comfort. He is with me, and what can I fear?" Although the parting from home drew tears from her eyes, she was resigned to the circumstances that compelled it. On the following day, the vessel having neared the light-house, Mr. Seton's symptoms continued to be favorable. From this position, Mrs. Seton addressed a note to her sister-in-law, Rebecca, in which she says:—"I feel so satisfied in my hidden treasure, that you might think me an old rock. Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien (the captain and his wife) are really kind friends to us. The steward seems as anxious

to please me as even our Mary* could be, and a dear little child, about eighteen months old, makes me sigh for Tatté;† but, as I told my Bayley, I neither look behind nor before—*only up*,—there is my rest, and I want nothing. They threaten a storm, but I fear not *with Him*." With this calm temper of mind, which Mrs. Seton uniformly preserved, a voyage across the Atlantic could not fail to be a source of abundant enjoyment, whether resulting from the contemplation of the natural wonders which it presented, or from the spiritual associations which it so readily suggests to a religious soul. About midway between America and Italy she thus wrote to a friend at home:—"We are now past the Western Isles, which are exactly half-way between New York and Leghorn, and hourly expect to meet some vessel that may take our letters home—as I am sure my very dear friend will be among the first inquirers of news from us. I write, though sure there can be little to interest you after saying that Mr. Seton is daily getting better and that little Anna and myself are well. If I dared indulge my enthusiasm, and describe, as far as I could give them words, my extravagant enjoyments in gazing on the ocean, and the rising and setting sun, and the moonlight evenings, a quire of paper would not contain what I should tell you; but one subject you will share with me, which engages my whole soul,—the dear, the tender, the gracious love with which every moment has been marked in these my heavy hours of trial. You will believe, because you know, how blessed they are who rest on our Heavenly Father. Not one struggle nor desponding thought to contend with—confiding hope and consoling peace has attended my way through storms and dangers that must have terrified a soul whose rock is not Christ."

* A servant, probably, at home. † Her youngest child, an infant.

During the voyage nothing of particular interest transpired except the sickness of Mrs. Seton's daughter, who caught the whooping-cough from the captain's child, which was laboring under the same complaint. Mr. Seton's health was apparently improving, though he was much annoyed by the coughing and crying of the children around him. His wife divided her time between her devotions and the attentions which she bestowed upon him and her suffering child. Her sentiments and resolutions are thus recorded by herself, on the 11th of November:—"My dear little Anna shed many tears on her prayer-book, over the 92d psalm, in consequence of my telling her that we offended God every day. Our conversation began by her asking me if God put down our bad actions in his book as well as our good ones. /She said she wondered how any one could be sorry to see a dear infant die; she thought there was more cause to cry when they were born./ Considering the infirmity and corrupt nature which would overpower the spirit of grace, and the enormity of the offence to which the least indulgence of them would lead me—in the anguish of my soul, shuddering to offend my adored Lord, I have this day solemnly engaged that, through the strength of his Holy Spirit, I will not again expose that corrupt and infirm nature to the smallest temptation I can avoid; and, therefore, if my Heavenly Father will once more reunite us all, that I will make a daily sacrifice of every wish, even the most innocent, lest they should betray me to deviation from the solemn and sacred vow I have now made. O my God! imprint it on my soul with the strength of the Holy Spirit, that, by his grace supported and defended, I may never more forget that thou art my all, and that I cannot be received in thy heavenly kingdom without a pure and faithful heart, supremely devoted to thy holy will. Oh, keep me for the sake of Jesus Christ!"

She thus notes the incidents of November 16:—"A heavy storm of thunder and lightning at midnight. My soul, assured and strong in its Almighty Protector, encouraged itself in him, while the knees trembled as they bent to him—the worm of the dust shaking at the terrors of its Almighty Judge—a helpless child clinging to the mercy of its tender Father—a redeemed soul strong in the strength of its adored Saviour! After reading a great deal, and long and earnest prayer, went to bed, but could not rest. A little voice, (my own Anna, who I thought was asleep,) in a soft whisper said, 'Come hither, all ye weary souls.' I changed my place to her arms; the rocking of the vessel and the breaking of the waves were forgot; the heavy sighs and restless pains were lost in a sweet refreshing sleep. Adored Redeemer! it was thy word, by the voice of one of thy little ones, who promises indeed to be one of thy angels." On the 18th of the same month, while the *Ave Maria* bells were ringing, the vessel arrived in the mole of Leghorn. The events which followed between this period and that of her husband's death were all recorded by Mrs. Seton in a journal, which, although not possessing the strict connection and phraseology of a narrative, will perhaps be found more interesting by the reader than if presented in another form, as it is a lifelike picture of the author's character, drawn by herself, at moments when she poured forth her sentiments and emotions to a bosom friend with the utmost simplicity of manner, and with all the ardor which an entire freedom from restraint would permit. This journal was written at the lazaretto of Leghorn, where Mr. Seton, with his wife and child, was detained during four weeks on account of his sickness, and his having come from New York, where the yellow fever had made its appearance.

"19th Nov., 1803—10 o'clock at night.—How eagerly would you listen to the voice that should offer to tell you

where your dear sister is now—your soul's sister. Yet you could not rest in your bed if you saw her as she is, sitting in one corner of an immense prison, bolted in—a single window, double-grated with iron, through which, if I should want any thing, I am to call a sentinel with a cocked hat and long rifled gun—that is, that he may not receive the dreadful infection we are supposed to have brought with us from New York.

"To commence from where I left off last night: I went to sleep and dreamed I was in the middle aisle of Trinity Church, singing with all my soul the hymn at our dear sacrament. So much comfort made me more than satisfied, and when I heard in the morning a boat was alongside of our ship, I flew on deck and would have thrown myself in the arms of dear Carlton;* but he retired from me, and a guard, whom I saw for the first time, said, 'Don't touch.' It was now explained that our ship was the first to bring the news of the yellow fever in New York, which our want of a bill of health discovered; our ship must go out in the roads, and my poor William, being sick, must go with his baggage to the lazaretto. At this moment the band of music that always welcomes strangers came under our cabin window, playing 'Hail Columbia,' and those little tunes that set the darlings singing and dancing at home. Mrs. O'Brien and the rest were almost wild with joy, while I was glad to hide in my berth the full heart of sorrow, which seemed as if it must break. You cannot have an idea of the looks of my poor William, who seemed as if he could not live over the day. Presently appeared a boat with fourteen oars, and we entered into another fastened to it. The lazaretto being some miles from town, we were rowed out to sea again, and, after an hour's ride over the waves, the chains which cross

* Dr. Guy Carlton Bayley, of New York, her step-brother, at that time in the counting-house of the Messrs. Fillecht.

the entrance of the canal which leads to this place were let down at the signal of several successive bells, and, after another rowing between walls as high as our second-story windows, and the quarrelling and hallooing of the watermen where we should be landed, the boat stopped. Another succession of bells brought down one guard after another, and in about half an hour Monsieur le Capitano, who, after much consultation and whispering with his lieutenant, said we might come out, upon which every one retreated, and a guard pointed with his bayonet the way which we were to go. An order from the commandant was sent from our boat to the Capitano, which was received on the end of a stick, and they were obliged to light a fire to smoke it before it could be read. My books always go with me, and they were carefully put up, but must all be looked over and the pages and the little secretary examined. The person who did this, and examined our mattresses, must perform as long a quarantine as ourselves. Poor little Anna! how she trembled! and William tottered along as if every moment he must fall, which had he done, no one for their lives dared to touch him. We were directed to go opposite to the window of the Capitano's house, in which sat Mrs. Philip Filicchi—compliments and kind looks without number; a fence was between us, but, I fear, did not hide my fatigue both of soul and body: first we had chairs handed, or rather placed for us, for, after we had touched them, they could not go back to the house. At length we were shown the door we were to enter—No. 6, up twenty stone steps—a room with high arched ceilings, like St. Paul's, brick floor, and naked walls. The Capitano sent three warm eggs, a bottle of wine, and some slices of bread. William's mattress was soon spread, and he upon it; he could not touch wine or eggs. Our little syrups, currant jolly, drinks, &c., which he must have every half hour on board ship—where were they? I had

board the lazaretto was the very place for comfort for the sick, and brought nothing; soon found there was a little closet, on which my knees found rest, and, after emptying my heart, and washing the bricks with my tears, returned to my poor William, and found him and Ann both in want of a preacher. Dear puss, she soon found a rope that had tied her box, began jumping away to warm herself, for the coldness of the walls and bricks made us shiver. At sunset, dinner came from the kind Filicchi, with other necessities; we went to the grate again to see them. And now, on the ship-mattresses spread on this cool floor, my William and Anna are sound asleep, and I trust that God, who has given him strength to go through a day of such exertion, will carry us on. He is our all indeed. My eyes smart so much with crying, wind, and fatigue, that I must close them and lift up my heart; sleep won't come very easily. If you had seen little Anna's arms clasped around my neck, at her prayers, while the tears rolled a stream, how you would love her! I read her to sleep, little pieces of trust in God; she said, 'Mamma, if papa should die here—but God will be with us.' God is with us, and if sufferings abound in us, his consolations also greatly abound, and far exceed an utterance. If the wind (for it is said there were never such storms at this season) that now almost puts out my light and blows on my William at every crevice, and over our chimney like loud thunder, could come from any but his command,—or if the circumstances that have placed us in so forlorn a situation were not guided by his hand,—miserable indeed would be our case. Within this hour he has had a violent fit of coughing, so as to bring up blood; which agitates and distresses him through all his endeavors to hide it. What shall we say? This is the hour of trial; the Lord support and strengthen us in it! Retrospections bring anguish; 'press forward toward the mark and prize.'

"20th, Sunday morning.—The matin bells awakened my soul to its most painful regrets, and filled it with an agony of sorrow which would not at first find relief even in prayer. In the little closet, from whence there is a view of the open sea and the beatings of the waves against the high rocks at the entrance of this prison, which throws them violently back and raises the white foam as high as its walls, I first came to my senses, and reflected that I was offending my only Friend and resource in my misery, and voluntarily shutting from my soul the only consolation it could receive. Pleading for mercy and strength brought peace, and, with a cheerful countenance, I asked William what we should do for breakfast. The doors were unbarred, and a bottle of milk set down in the entrance of the room, poor Philip fearing to come too near. Little Anna and William ate it with bread, and I walked the floor with a crust and a glass of wine. William could not sit up. His ague came on, and my soul's agony with it. My husband on the cold bricks without fire, shivering and groaning, lifting his dim and sorrowful eyes with a fixed gaze in my face, while his tears ran on his pillow without one word. Anna rubbed one hand, I the other, till his fever came on. The Capitano brought us news that our time was lessened five days—told me to be satisfied with the dispensations of God, &c., and was answered by such a succession of sobs that he soon departed. Mr. Filicchi now came to comfort my William, and when he went away we said as much of our blessed service as William could go through. I then was obliged to lay my head down. Dinner was sent from town, and a servant to stay with us during our quarantine,—Louis, an old man, very little, with gray hairs and blue eyes, which changed their expression from joy to sorrow, as if they would console and still enliven. My face was covered with a handkerchief when he came in, and, tired of the sight of men with

soaked hats, cockades, and bayonets, I did not look up. Poor Louis! how long shall I remember his voice of sorrow and tenderness when refusing the dinner! He looked up with lifted hands in some prayer that God would comfort me, and so I was comforted when I did not look at my poor William; but to see him as he then was was worse than to see him dead. And now the bolts of another door were hammered open, and Louis, who was become an object of equal terror, having entered our room and touched what we had touched, had an apartment allotted him. How many times did the poor old man run up and down the nearly-perpendicular twenty steps to get things necessary for our comfort next morning! When all was done, I handed him a chair that he might rest. He jumped almost over it, and danced around me like a madman, declaring he would work all night to serve us. My William, wearied out, was soon asleep. Ann, with a flood of tears, said her prayers and soon forgot her sorrows, and it seemed as if opening my prayer-book and bending my knees was the signal for my soul to find rest. It was nine o'clock with us—three at home. I imagined what I had so often enjoyed, and consoled myself with the thought that, though separated in the body six thousand miles, my soul and the souls that I love were at the throne of grace at the same time in the same prayers to one Almighty Father, accepted through our adored Redeemer and enlightened by one blessed Spirit. Then did it rejoice indeed in the Lord, and triumph in the God of its salvation. After prayers, read my little book of sermons, and became far more happy than I had been wretched. Went to bed at twelve; got up twice to prayers and to help my poor William.

"Monday.—Awoke with the same rest and comfort with which I had laid down. Gave my William his warm milk, and began to consider our situation, though so unfavorable

to his complaint, as one of the steps in the dispensations of that Almighty will which could alone choose right for us; and therefore set Ann to work, and myself to the dear Scriptures, as usual, lying close behind the poor shiverer to keep him from the ague. Our Capitano came with his guards and put up a very neat bed and curtains, sent by Filicchi, and fixed the benches on which Ann and I were to lie; took down our names—Signore Gulielmo, Signora Elizabeth, and Signora Anna Maria. The voice of kindness which again entreated me to look up to *le bon Dieu* made me look up to the speaker; and in our Capitano I found every expression of a benevolent heart. His great cocked hat being off, I found it had hid his gray hairs and a kind and affectionate countenance. 'I had a wife; I loved her—I loved her. Oh! she gave me a daughter which she commended to my care, and died.' He clasped his hands and looked up, and then at my William. 'If God calls, what can we do?' *et que voulez-vous, Signora?* I began to love my Capitano. Read, and jumped the rope to warm me; looked around our prison and found that our situation was beautiful; comforted my William all I could, rubbing his hands, and wiping his tears, and giving words to his soul, which was too weak to pray for itself; heard Ann read, while I watched the setting sun in a cloud. After both were asleep, read, prayed, wept, and prayed again, until eleven; at no loss to know the hours night and day; four bells strike every hour and ring every quarter.

"*Tuesday*.—My William was better, and very much encouraged by his doctor, Tutilli, who was very kind to him; also our Capitano, who now seemed to understand me a little, again repeated, 'I loved my wife—I loved her, and she died, *et que voulez-vous, Signora?*' Talked with the Filicchi at the grate, and with great difficulty got my William up the stairs again; nursed him, read to him, and

heard Ann read, and made the most of our troubles. Our Louis brought us an elegant bouquet—jessamines, geraniums, pinks, &c.; he makes excellent soup; cooks all with charcoal in a little pot. No sunset; heavy gale, which, if any thing could move our walls, would certainly bring them down; the roaring of the sea sounds like thunder; passed my evening as the last, quite reconciled to the sentinel's watch and bolts and bars; not afraid of my candle, as the window-shutter is the only piece of wood about us.

"*Wednesday*.—Not only willing to take my cross, but kissed it too; and while glorying in our consolations, my poor William was taken with an ague which was almost too much for him. He told me, as he had often done before, that it was too late; his strength was going from him every hour, and he should go gradually, but not long. This to me: to his friends quite cheerful; he was not able to go to them; they were admitted to our door; must not touch the least thing near us; and a point of our Capitano's stick warned my William off, when in eager conversation he would go too near. It reminded me of going to see the lions. One of the guards brought a pot of incense also to purify our air. A quiet half hour at sunset; Ann and I sang advent hymns with a low voice. Oh! after all was asleep, said our dear service alone—William had not been able in the day; found heavenly consolation, forgot prisons, bolts, and sorrows, and would have rejoiced to have sung with St. Paul and Silas.

"*Thursday*.—I find my present opportunity a treasure, and my confinement of body a liberty of soul, which I may never again enjoy while they are united. Every moment not spent with my dear books, or in my nursing duty, is a loss. Ann is so happy with her rag-baby and little presents, it is a pleasure to see her. Our Capitano brought us news that other five days were granted, and the 10th of December

we were free. Poor William says with a groan, 'I believe before thou.' We pray and cry together, till fatigue overpowers him, and then he says he is willing to go. Cheering up is useless; he seems easier after venting his sorrow, and always gets quiet sleep after his struggle. A heavy storm of wind, which drives the spray from the sea against our window, adds to his melancholy. If I could forget my God one moment at these times, I should go mad; but *He* hushes all. 'Be still, and know that I am God your Father.' Dear home, dearest sisters, my little ones—well—either protected by God in this world or in heaven. It is a sweet thought to dwell on, that all those I most tenderly love love God, and if we do not meet again here, there we shall be separated no more. If I have lost them now, their gain is infinite and eternal. How often I tell my William, 'when you awake in that world you will find nothing could tempt you to return to this; you will see that your care over your wife and little ones was like a hand, only to hold the cup, which God himself will give if he takes you.' Heavenly Father, pity the weak and burdened souls of thy poor creatures who have not strength to look to thee, and lift us from the dust for his sake, our resurrection and our life, Jesus Christ, our adored Redeemer.

"*Friday*.—A day of bodily pain, but peace with God. Kneeling on our mats round the table and said our dear service; the storm of wind so great. Carlton was admitted at the foot of the stairs, and from the top I conversed with him, which is always a great pleasure, as he seems to me next to an angel. Ventured to remind my poor William that it was our darling William's birthday, which cost him many tears; he also cried over our dear Harriet's profile—indeed he is so weak that even a thought of home makes him shed tears. How gracious is our Lord who strengthens my poor soul! Consider my husband, who left his all to

seek a milder climate, confined in this place of high and damp walls, exposed to cold and wind, which penetrates to the very bones, without fire except the kitchen charenel, which oppresses his breast so much as to nearly convulse him; no little syrups, nor softener of the cough; milk and bark, Iceland moss, and opium pills, (which he takes quietly as a duty, without seeming even to hope,) in all I can offer him from day to day. When nature fails, and I can no longer look up with cheerfulness, I hide my head on the chair by his bedside, and he thinks I am praying; and pray I do, for prayer is all my comfort—without it I should be of little service to him; night and day he calls me 'his life, his soul, his dearest, his all.' Our Capitano came this afternoon, and seeing poor William in a high fever, said, 'In this room what sufferings have I seen! There lay an Armenian begging a knife to end the struggle of death; there where the Signora's bed is, in the frenzy of fever, a Frenchman insisted on shooting himself, and died in agonies.' Little billets of paper pasted on the doors mark how many days different persons have stayed, and the shutter is all over notched—10, 20, 30, 40 days. I do not mark ours, trusting they are marked above. He only knows best. Dear, dear William, I can sometimes inspire him for a few moments to feel that it would be sweet to die; he always says, 'My Father and my God, thy will be done.' Our Father in pity and compassion, our God in power, to succor and to save, who promises to pardon and save us through our adored Redeemer, who will not let those perish for whom he has shed his precious blood. Only to reflect, if we did not know and love God—if we did not feel the consolations and embrace the cheering hope he has set before us, and find our delight in the study of his blessed word and truth, what would become of us?

'Though torn from nature's most endearing ties,
The heart's warm hope, and love's maternal glow,

• • • • •

Though sorrows still affecting ill prepare,
And e'er each passing day her presence lowers,
And darkened fancy shades with many cares,

With many trials crowds the future hours:

Still in the Lord I will rejoice,

Still to my God I lift my voice,

Father of mercies! still my grateful lays

Shall hymn thy name, exulting in thy praise.

J. H. H.

"Capitano says, 'all religions are good; it is good to keep one's own, but yours is not as good as mine—to do to others as you would wish them to do to you—that is all religion and the only point.' Tell me, dear Capitano, do you take this as a good principle only, or also as a command? 'I reverence the command, Signora.' Well, Mons. Capitano, he who commands your excellent rule also commanded in the first place: 'Love the Lord your God with all your soul,' and do you not give that the first place, Capitano? 'Ah, Signora, it is excellent, *mais il y a tant de choses*.' Poor Capitano, sixty years of age, and yet to find that to give God the soul interferes with so many things! Dear little Ann,—the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be—lost!"

"*Tuesday, 29th Nov.*—Was obliged to go to bed at ten last night, to get warm in little Ann's arms; awoke this morning while the moon was setting opposite our window, but could not enjoy its brightness, as the spray from the sea keeps the glass always thick; laid in bed till nine with little Ann, to explain to her our *Te Deum*. She said, 'One thing always troubles me, mamma; our Saviour says, They who would reign with him must suffer with him, and if I was now cut off, where should I go, for I have not yet suf-

fered?" She coughs very much, with a great deal of pain in the breast. She said, 'Sometimes I think, when this pain comes in my breast, that God will call me soon, and take me from this world, where I am always offending him; and how good would that be, if he gives me a sickness that I may bear patiently, that I may try and please him!' My Anna, you please him every day when you help me through my troubles. 'Oh, do I, mamma? thank God, thank God!' After breakfast, read our psalms and the 35th chapter of Isaiah to my William, with so much delight, that it made us all merry; he read, at little Ann's request, the last chapter of Revelations, but the tones of his voice no heart can stand. A storm of wind still, and very cold. William, with a blanket over his shoulders, creeps to the old man's fire; Ann jumps the rope, and Matty hops on one foot five or six times the length of the room without stopping—laugh at me, my sister, but it is very good exercise, and warms sooner than a fire when there is a warm heart to set it in motion. Sang hymns and read promises to William, shivering under the bed-clothes, and felt that God is with us, and that he is our all. The fever comes hot, the bed shakes even with his breathing—my God, my Father!

"*St. Andrews, 30th Nov.*—William again by the kitchen fire. Last night, thirty or forty poor souls of all nations, Greeks, Turks, Spaniards, and Frenchmen, arrived here from a shipwreck—no mattresses, no clothes or food—great-coats without shirts—shirts without coats—these sent all to one room with naked walls and the jug of water, until the commandant should find leisure to supply them. Our Capitano says he can do nothing without orders. '*Patience, que voulez-vous, Signora?*' Anna says, 'for all we are so cold and in this prison, mamma, how happy we are compared with them, and we have peace too; they quarrel, fight, and halloo all the time; the Capitano sends us even chestnuts and fruits

from his own table; these have not broad.' Dear Ann, you will see many more such mysteries. At William's bedside, we have said our daily service; he thought it would stop his shiverings. My William's soul is so humble, it will hardly embrace that faith, its only resource. At any time, whom have we but our Redeemer? but when the spirit is on the brink of departure, it must cling to him with increased force, or where is it? Dear William, it is not from the impulse of terror you turn to your God; you tried and wished to serve him, long before this trial came; why, then, will you not consider him as the Father who knows all the different means and dispositions of his children, and will graciously receive those who come to him by that way which he has appointed? You say your only hope is in Christ; what other hope do we need? He says that the first effects he ever felt from the calls of the gospel he experienced from our dear Hobart's pressing the question in one of his sermons:— 'What avails gaining the whole world and losing your own soul?*' The reflections he made when he returned home were, 'I toil and toil, and what is it? what I gain destroys me daily, soul and body; I live without God in the world, and shall die miserably.' Mr. F. D., with whom he had not been in habits of business, offered to join him in an adventure; it succeeded far beyond their expectation. Mr. F. D. said, when they wound it up, 'One thing you know, I have been long in business,—began with very little—have built a house, and have enough to build another. I have generally succeeded in my undertakings, and attribute all to this,—that, whether they are great or small, I always ask a blessing of God, and look to that blessing for success.' William says, 'I was struck with shame and sorrow that I had been a heathen be-

* Rev. John Henry Hobart was an Episcopalian minister of New York, whose church Mrs. Seton frequented.

fore God.' These he calls his two warnings which awakened his soul, and speaks of them always with tears. Oh, the promises he makes if it please God to spare him!

"I have had our mate to see us from Captain O'Brien—talked out of the window to him; and one of the sailors, who seemed to love us as his own soul, always flying to serve and trying to please us while on board, came with him. Poor Charles! he turned pale when he saw my head out of the iron bars, and called out, 'Why, Mrs. Seton, are you in a prison?' He looked behind all the way as he went, and shook his head at Ann as long as he could see her. Charles had lived at the quarantine at Staten Island, and that, without his good and affectionate heart, would make me love him. I shall never hear a sailor's yo! yo! without thinking of his melancholy song. He is the captain's and everybody's favorite. How gracious is my adored Master, who gives even to the countenance of the stranger the look of kindness and pity! From the time we first landed here, one of the guards of our room looked always with sorrow and sympathy upon us, and, though I cannot understand him nor he me, we talk away very fast. He showed me yesterday he was very sick, by pointing to his breast and throat. When the Capitano came, I told him how sorry I was for poor Philippo. 'Oh, Signora, he is very well off; he has been two years married to a very handsome young woman of sixteen, has two children, and receives 8s. 6d. per day: to be sure, he is obliged to sleep in the lazaretto, but in the morning goes home to his wife for an hour or two; it is not possible to spare him longer from his duty. *Et que voulez-vous, Signora?*' Good and merciful Father, who gives content to a cheerful heart with 8s. 6d. per day; a wife and two children to maintain with such a pittance! Often let me think of Philippo, when I have not enough, or think I

have not. He is twenty-two, his wife eighteen. Thought goes to two at home most dear—H. and B.

"Went to the railings with little Anna, to receive from our Capitano's daughter a baby she had been making for her. She has a kind, good countenance, and hangs on her father's arm; has refused an offer of marriage, that she may take care of him. Such a sight awakened my recollections.

"Dec. 1.—Arose between six and seven, before the day had dawned—the light of the moon opposite our window was still the strongest—not a breath of wind—the sea, which before I had always seen in violent commotion, now gently seemed to creep to the rocks it had so long been beating over—every thing around us at rest except two little white gulls flying to the westward toward my home, toward my loves,—that thought did not do,—flying toward heaven, where I tried to send my soul—the angel of peace met it, and poured over the oil of love and praise, driving off every vain imagination, and led it to its Saviour and its God. *We praise thee, O God!* the dear strain of praise in which I always seem to meet the souls I love, and *Our Father*—these two prayers are the union of love and praise, and in them the soul meets all. At ten o'clock rode with William and Anna—at twelve he was at rest, Ann playing in the next room. Alone to all the world—one of those sweet pauses in spirit, when the body seems to me forgotten, came over me. In the year 1789, when my father was in England, one morning in May, in the lightness of a cheerful heart I jumped in the wagon that was driving to the woods for brush, about a mile from home; the boy who drove it began to cut, and I set off in the woods, soon found an outlet in a meadow, and a chestnut-tree, with several young ones growing around it, attracted my attention as a seat; but when I came to it, found rich moss under it and a warm sun. Here, then, was a sweet bed—the air still, a clear blue vault above—the num-

berless sounds of spring-melody and joy—the sweet clovers and wild-flowers I had got by the way, and a heart as innocent as human heart could be, filled even with enthusiastic love to God and admiration of his works. Still I can feel every sensation that passed through my soul; I thought at that time my father did not care for me. Well, God was my Father, my all. I prayed, sang hymns, cried, laughed, talking to myself of how far He could place me above all sorrow. Then I laid still to enjoy the heavenly peace that came over my soul, and I am sure, in the two hours so enjoyed, grew ten years in my spiritual life; told cousin Joe to go home with his wood, not to mind me, and walked a mile round to see the roof of the parsonage. There I made another hearty prayer, then sang all the way home, with a good appetite for the samp and fat pork. Well, all this came strong in my head this morning, when, as I tell you, the body let the spirit alone. I had prayed and cried heartily, which is my daily and hourly comfort, and, closing my eyes with my head upon the table, lived all those sweet hours over again—made believe I was under the chestnut-tree—felt so peaceable a heart, so full of love to God—such confidence and hope in him. The wintry storms of time shall be over, and the unclouded spring enjoyed forever. So you see, as you know, with God for our portion, there is no prison in high walls and bolts; no sorrow in the soul that waits on him, though beset with present cares and gloomy prospects. For this freedom I can never be sufficiently thankful, as in my William's case it keeps alive what in his weak state of body would naturally fail; and often when he hears me repeat the psalms of triumph in God, and read St. Paul's faith in Christ, with my whole soul, it so enlivens his spirit that he makes them also his own, and all our sorrows are turned into joy. Oh, well may I love God, well may my whole soul strive to please him, for what but the

pon of an angel can ever express what he has done and is constantly doing for me? While I live, while I have my being in time and through eternity, let me sing praises to my God.

"Dec. 2.—Enjoyed the morn and daybreak; read the commentary on the 104th psalm, and sang hymns in bed till ten; a hard frost in the night; endeavored to make a fire in my room with brush, but was smoked out; the poor strangers, almost mad with cold and hunger, quarrelled, battled, and at last sat down in companies on the grass with cards, which made them as noisy as their anger. Patience! Anna sick, William tired out! A clear sunset, which cheered my heart, though it was all the time singing *De profundis*, from the lowest depth of wo; the *Ave Marie* bell rings, while the sun sets, on one side of us, and the bells 'for the dead' on the other; the latter sometimes continue a long while; in the morning always call again to pray for the 'souls in purgatory.' Our Capitano said a great deal on the pleasure I should enjoy on Christmas at Pisa, in seeing all the ceremonies. The enjoyments of Christmas! Heavenly Father, who knows my inmost soul, he knows how it would enjoy, and will also pity while it is cut off from what it so much longs for. One thing is in my power—though communion with those my soul loves is not within my reach in one sense, in the other what can deprive me of it?—still in spirit we may meet. At five o'clock here it will be twelve there. At five, then, in some corner on my knees I may spend the time they are at the altar; and if the cup of salvation cannot be received in the strange land evidently, virtually it may, with the blessing of Christ, and the cup of thanksgiving supply in a degree that which, if I could obtain it, would be my strongest desire. Oh, my soul! what can shut us out from the love of Him who will even dwell within us through love?

"Dec. 4.—Our Captain O'Brien and his wife found their way to us—'must not touch Signora,' says Philipppo, dividing us with his stick. Kind and affectionate captain, when I ran down to meet him, the tears danced in his eyes, while poor William and Ann peeped through the grates. Mrs. O'Brien began to cry; we could not see them but a few minutes for the cold. Our lazaretto captain had sent us audirons, small wood, &c., and I have doctored the chimney with a curtain, so as to make the smoke bearable; have had an anxious day between father and Ann. She was very ill for some hours; when the cause of her sufferings was removed, we went on our knees together. Oh, may her dear soul long send forth such precious tears! Dear, dear Rebecca, how often have we nursed up the fire together, as I do now alone!—alone? recall the word—my Bible, commentaries, Kempis,—visible and continual enjoyment,—when I cannot get hours, I take minutes. Invisible! Oh, the company is numberless. Sometimes I feel so assured that the Guardian Angel is immediately present that I look from my book, and can hardly be persuaded I was not touched. 'Poor soul!' John Henry Hobart would say, 'she will lose her reason in that prison.' But the enjoyments only come when all is quiet and I have passed an hour or two with King David or the prophet Isaiah. Those hours, I often think, I shall hereafter esteem the most precious in my life. My Father and my God, who by the consoling voice of his word builds up the soul in hope, so as to free it even for hours of its encumbrance, confirming and strengthening it by constant experience of his indulgent goodness, giving it a new life in him, even while in the midst of pains and sufferings sustaining, directing, consoling, and blessing, through every changing scene of its pilgrimage, making his will its guide to temporal comfort and eternal glory,—how shall the most unwearied diligence,

the most cheerful compliance, the most humble resignation, even enough express my love, my joy, thanksgiving, and praise?

"Dec. 12.—A week has passed, my dear sister, without even one little memorandum of the pen. The first day of it, (Sunday,) that dear day in which I always find my blessing, was passed in uninterrupted prayers, anxiety, and watching. On the 5th, (Monday,) was early awakened by my poor William in great suffering; sent for the doctor Tutilli, who, as soon as he saw him, told him he was not wanted, but I must send for him who would minister to his soul. In this moment I stood alone as to the world; my William looked in silent agony at me, and I at him, each fearing to weaken the other's strength; at the moment he drew himself toward me, and said, 'I breathe out my soul with you.' The exertion he made assisted nature's remaining strength, and he threw a quantity from his lungs, which had threatened to stop their motion, and, so doing, experienced so great a revolution that in a few hours afterward he seemed nearly the same as when we entered the lazaretto. Oh, that day! it was spent close by his bedside on my little mat—he slumbered the most of every hour; and did I not pray, and did I not praise? No inquiring visitor disturbed the solemn silence—no breakfast or dinner to interrupt the rest. Carlton came at sunset; Mrs. F., they thought, was dying—he thought his poor brother so—and then came our Capitano with so much offered kindness. He was shocked at the tranquillity of my William, and distressed at the thought that I was alone with him, for the doctor had told him that, notwithstanding his present relief, if the expectoration from the lungs did not return he might be gone in a few hours. Would I have some one in the room? Oh no! what had I to fear? And what *had* I to fear? I lay down as if to rest, that he might not be uneasy; listened all

night—sometimes by the fire, sometimes lying down, sometimes thought the breathing stopped, and sometimes, alarmed by its heaviness, kissed his poor face to see if it was cold. Well, I was alone; dear, indulgent Father! could I be alone while clinging fast to thee in continual prayer or thanksgiving, prayer for him, and joy, wonder, and delight to feel assured that what I had so fondly hoped and confidently asserted really proved, in the hour of trial, to be more than I could hope, more than I could conceive? that my God could and would bear me through the most severe trials, with that strength, confidence, and affiance, which, if every circumstance of the case was considered, seemed more than a human being would expect or hope? But his consolations, who shall speak them? How can utterance be given to that which only his spirit can feel? At daylight, the wished-for change took place. Mr Hall* came in the morning with Mr. Filiochi and the Capitano; went away with a promise to come again, and the intervening days and evenings have been spent in constant attention to the main concern, but, from a singularity of disposition which rather delights in going on than in retrospecting sorrow, have rather (when I could only keep awake by writing, according to the old custom) busied myself in writing the *first sermon* for my dear little Dick. William goes on gently, but keeps me busy. Ann is a treasure. She was reading yesterday that John was imprisoned. 'Yes, papa, Herod imprisoned him, and Miss Herodias gave him liberty.' 'No, my dear; she had him beheaded.' 'Well, papa, she released him from prison and sent him to God.' Oh! after my own heart!

"Dec. 18.—Five days more, and our quarantine is ended. Lodgings are engaged at Pisa, on the borders of the Arno.

* Protestant Chaplain of the British Factory at Leghorn.

My heart used to be full of poetical visions about this famous river, but it has no room for visions now; one only vision is before it. No one ever saw my William without giving him the quality of an amiable man; but to see that character exalted to the peaceful, humble Christian, waiting the will of God with a patience that seemed more than human, and a firm faith which would do honor to the most distinguished piety, is a happiness that is allowed only to the poor little mother who is separated from all other happiness connected with this scene of things. No sufferings, nor weakness, nor distress, (and from these he is never free in any degree,) can prevent his following me daily in prayer, the psalms, and generally large readings of the Scriptures. If he is a little better, he enlarges his attention; if worse, he is more eager not to lose a moment; and, except the day which we thought his last, he has never failed one day in this course since our entrance in these stone walls, the 19th of November. He very often says, this is the period of his life which, if he live or die, he will always consider as blessed, the only time which he has not lost. Not the smallest murmur—oh! and lifting up of the eyes is the strongest expression I have yet heard from him in the rapid progress of his complaint, which has reduced him almost to nothing, and from its very nature gives him no release from irritation in violent coughing, chills, oppression, weakness, and even in the weight of his own limbs seems more than a mortal could bear. 'Why art thou so heavy, O my soul!' is the only comfort he seems to find in words; often talks of his darlings, but most of meeting *one family* in heaven; talks of those we have left behind, as if it was but yesterday, and of dear Henry Hobart, whose visits and society he misses most, as they would be his greatest consolation in these hours of sorrow. When I thank God for my creation and preservation, it is with a warmth of feeling I never could

know until now: to wait on him in my William's soul and body; to console and soothe these hours of affliction and pain, watching and weariness, which next to God I alone could do; to strike up the cheerful notes of hope and Christian triumph, which from his partial love he hears with the more enjoyment from me, because to me he attributes the greatest share of them; to hear him, in pronouncing the name of his Redeemer, declare that I first taught him the sweetness of the sound—oh, if I was in the dungeon of this lazaretto, I should bless and praise my God for these days of retirement and abstraction from the world, which have afforded leisure and opportunity for so blessed a work.

"Dec. 14.—Said my dear prayers alone while William was asleep; did not dare to remind him of them, for weakness and pain quite overpower him. Rain and storm, as indeed we have had almost every day of the twenty-six we have been here. The dampness about us would be thought dangerous for a person in health—and my William's sufferings—oh! well I know that God is above. Capitano, you need not always point your silent look and finger there; if I thought our condition the providence of *man*, instead of the weeping Magdalen, as you so graciously call me, you would find me a lioness, willing to burn your lazaretto about your ears, if it was possible, that I might carry off my poor prisoner to breathe the air of heaven in some more seasonable place. To keep a poor soul, who comes to your country for his life, thirty days shut up in damp walls, smoke and wind from all quarters, blowing even the curtain round his bed, (and his bones almost through,) and now the shadow of death, trembling if he only stands a few minutes! He is to go to Pisa for his health—this day his prospects are very far from Pisa—but oh, my heavenly Father! I know that these contradictory events are permitted and guided by thy wisdom, which only is light. We are in darkness, and must be

thankful that our knowledge is not wanted to perfect thy work—and also keep in mind that infinite mercy which, in permitting the sufferings of the perishing body, has provided for our souls so large an opportunity of comfort and nourishment for an eternal life, where we shall assuredly find that all things have worked together for our good, for our sure trust in thee.

"Dec. 15.—Finished reading the Testament through, which we began the 6th of October, and my Bible as far as Ezekiel, which I have always read to myself in rotation, but the lessons appointed in the prayer-book to my William. To-day, read him several passages in Isaiah, which he enjoyed so much that he was carried for a while out of his troubles—indeed, our reading is an unfailling comfort. William says he feels like a person brought to the light after many years of darkness, when he heard the Scriptures as the law of God, and therefore sacred, but not discerning what part he had in them or feeling that they were the fountain of eternal life.

"Dec. 16.—A heavy day; part of our service together, part alone. They have bolted us in to-night, expecting to find my William gone to-morrow, but he rests quietly, and God is with us.

"Dec. 17 and 18.—Melancholy days of combat with nature's weakness, and the courage of hope which pictured our removal from the lazaretto to Pisa.

"Dec. 19.—Arose with the light, and had every thing prepared for the anxious hour; at ten, all in readiness, and at eleven held the hand of my William, while he was seated on the arms of two men and conducted from the lazaretto to Filicchi's coach, surrounded by a multitude of gazers, all sighing out, 'O poverino,' while my heart beat almost to fainting, lest he should die in the exertion; but the air revived him; his spirits were cheerful; and through fifteen

miles of heavy roads he was supported, and appeared stronger than when he set out. My Father and my God! was all my full heart of thankfulness could utter.

"Dec. 20.—Let me stop and ask myself if I can go through the remainder of my memorandum with that sincerity and exactness which has so far been adhered to; whether, in the crowd of anxieties and sorrows which are pressed in so small a compass of time, the overflowing of feeling can be suppressed, and my soul stand singly before my God. Yes, every moment of it speaks his praise, and therefore it shall be followed. My William was composed the greater part of the day, on a sofa, delighted with his change of situation, taste and elegance of every thing around him; every necessary comfort within his reach. We read, compared past and present, talked of heavenly hopes, and with our dear Carlton, (who was to stay with us four days,) and then went to rest in hopes of a good night; but I had scarcely fixed the pillows of the sofa, which I made my bed, before he called me to help him, and from that moment, the last complaint, which Dr. Tutilli told me must be decisive, came on.

"Dec. 21.—A kind of languid weakness seized the mind as well as overpowered the body; he must and would ride. The physician, Dr. Cartelach, whispered me he might die in the attempt; but there was no possibility of refusal, and it was concluded that opposition was worse than any risk—and, carried down in a chair, and supported in my trembling arms with pillows, we rode. Oh, my Father, well did you strengthen me in that hour! In five minutes we were forced to return, and to get him out of the coach, and in the chair up the stairs, and on the bed—words can never tell—

"Dec. 22.—A cloudy day and quiet.

"Dec. 23.—The complaint seemed lessened, and ride

again we must; took Madame De Tot (the lady of the house) with us, and returned in better spirits, and more able to help himself, than when we went out; and I really began to think riding must be good; but that was the last.

"Dec. 24.—Constant suffering, and for the first day confined in bed; the disorder of the bowels so violent that he said he could not last till morning; talked with cheerfulness about his darlings, thanked God that he had given him time to reflect and such consolation in his word and prayers; and, with the help of a small portion of laudanum, rested until midnight. He then awoke, and observed I had not laid down. I said, 'No, love, for the sweetest reflections keep me awake. Christmas day is begun; the day of our dear Redeemer's birth here, you know, is the day that opened to us the door of everlasting life.' 'Yes,' he said, 'and how I wish we could have the sacrament! well, we must do all we can;' and, putting a little wine in a glass, I said different parts of psalms and prayers which I had marked, hoping for a happy moment, and we took the cup of thanksgiving, setting aside the sorrow of time in the view of eternity. Oh, so happy to find its joys were strongly painted to him! On Sunday, O'Brien came, and my William gave me in his charge to take me home, with a composure and serenity that made us cold. Did not pass a mouthful through my lips that day, which was spent on my knees by his bedside, every moment I could look off my William; he anxiously prayed to be released that day, and followed me in prayer whenever he had the least cessation from extreme suffering.

"Dec. 28.—Was so impatient to be gone that I could scarcely persuade him to wet his lips, but continued calling his Redeemer to pardon and release him. As he always would have his door shut, I had no interruption. Carlton kept Anna out of the way; and every promise in the Scripture and prayer I could remember I continually repeated

to him, which seemed to be his only relief. When I stopped to give him any thing, 'Why do you do it? what do I want? I want to be in heaven—pray, pray for my soul. He said he felt so comfortable an assurance that his Redeemer would receive him that he saw his dear little Rebecca smiling before him; and told little Anna, 'Oh, if your father could take you with him!' And at midnight, when the cold sweat came on, he would reach out both his arms, and said repeatedly, 'You promised me you would go; come, come, fly!' At four, the hard struggle ceased: nature sank into a settled sob—'My dear wife and little ones,' and 'My Christ Jesus, have mercy and receive me,' was all I could distinguish; and again repeated, 'My Christ Jesus,' until a quarter past seven, when the dear soul took its flight to the blessed exchange it so much longed for.

"I often asked him, when he could not speak, 'You feel, my love, that you are going to your Redeemer?' and he mentioned, 'Yes,' with a look of peace. At a quarter past seven on Tuesday morning, December 27, his soul was released—and mine from a struggle next to death. And how will my dear sister understand, except you could conceive the scene of suffering my poor William passed through—that I took my little Anna in my arms, and made her kneel again with me by the dear body, and thank our Heavenly Father for relieving him from his misery—for the joyful assurance that, through our blessed Redeemer, he had entered into life eternal, and implored his protecting care and pity for us who have yet to finish our course? Now, opening the door to let the people know it was finished, servants and landlady all were at a loss to know what should be done; and, finding every one afraid of catching the complaint, as we should be of the yellow fever, I took two women who had washed and sometimes assisted me, and, again shutting the door, with their assistance did the last duties, and felt I had done

all—all that tenderest love and duty could do. My head had not rested for a week; three days and nights the fatigue had been incessant, and one meal in twenty-four hours; still I must wash, dress, pack up, and in one hour be in Mrs. Filicchi's carriage, and ride fifteen miles to Leghorn. Carlton and our old Louis stayed to watch; and my William was brought in the afternoon, and deposited in the house appointed, in the Protestant burying-ground. Oh! oh! oh! what a day!—close his eyes, lay him out, ride a journey, be obliged to see a dozen people in my room till night, and at night crowded with the whole sense of my situation. Oh, my Father and my God! The next morning at eleven, all the English and Americans in Leghorn met at the grave-house, and all was done. In all this, it is not necessary to dwell on the mercy and consoling presence of my dear Lord, for no mortal strength could support what I experienced. My William often asked me if I felt assured he would be accepted and pardoned; and I always tried to convince him that where the soul was so sincere as his, and submission to God's will so uniform as his had been throughout his trial, it became sinful to doubt one moment of his reception through the merits of his Redeemer. The night before his death, praying earnestly for him that his pardon might be sealed in heaven and his transgressions blotted out, after praying, I continued on my knees, laid my head on the chair by which I knelt, and insensibly lost myself. I saw in my slumber a little angel, with a pen in one hand and a sheet of white paper in the other; he looked at me, holding out the paper, and wrote in large letters—'Jesus.' This, though a vision of sleep, was a great comfort. He was very much affected when I told him, and said, a few hours before he died, 'The angel wrote, Jesus: he has opened the door of eternal life for me, and will cover me with his merits.' I had a similar dream the same night. The heavens appeared

a very bright blue; a little angel at some distance held open a division in the sky. A large black bird, like an eagle, flew toward me, and flapped its wings round and made every thing dark. The angel looked as if it held up the division waiting for something the bird came for. And so, alone from every friend on earth, walking the 'valley of the shadow of death,' we had sweet comfort even in our dreams, while faith convinced us they were realities."

Thus terminated for Mrs. Seton one of the severest trials that human infirmity is destined to encounter—the death of her husband in a land of strangers, all her relatives and friends separated from her by the wide ocean, and unable to afford that solace which her bereavement so naturally called for. But her own relation of this painful event is quite sufficient to show that her fortitude was equal to the ordeal to which she was subjected, and that she exhibited in her affliction a strength of mind and a moral energy as rare as they are worthy of admiration. On the very day that her husband breathed his last, when she was on the way from the melancholy spot to the residence of Mr. Filicchi in Leghorn, such was her entire resignation to the dispensations of Heaven, that "in her perpetual look upward she could enjoy in her silence of peace and deadly calmness the view of the beautiful country around."

On her arrival at Leghorn, she was received in the Filicchi family with every mark of the sincerest sympathy and the most unbounded generosity; "but," as she says, "my poor, high heart was in the clouds, soaring after my William's soul, and repeating, 'My God, you are my God, and so I am now alone in the world with you and my little ones; but you are my Father, and doubly theirs.'" The same day, in the evening, she was kindly visited by the Rev. Mr. Hall, who officiated at the interment of Mr. Seton. His first words to her were, "As the tree falls, madam, there it

lica." Among those who called upon her, she makes particular mention of the good old Capitano, who "came," she says, "with a black crape on the hat and arm, and such a look of sorrow at his poor Signora—all his kindness in the lazaretto was present. Dearest Anna melted his heart again, and he ours."

The impression which Mrs. Seton made upon the minds of those who had attended at the lazaretto and at Pisa, where her husband expired, and upon all indeed who formed her acquaintance, was of the most favorable character. We have seen already how cheerfully the officers and servants at the quarantine ministered to the wants of herself and her suffering husband; but subsequently, when the vain fear of contagion prevented others from laying out the corpse of Mr. Seton, and she herself, with the assistance of her wash-woman, undertook this sad duty, the people around gazed at her with astonishment, admiring her courage and fortitude, and exclaiming, with more of good feeling than judgment, "If she was not a heretic she would be a saint." All, however, according to their circumstances, performed the part of friendship, which met with a corresponding gratitude on the part of Mrs. Seton.

"The Filicchia," she says in a letter to her sister-in-law, "do all they can to ease my situation, and seem, indeed, that they cannot do enough. Indeed, from the day we left home, we have met with nothing but kindness, even in servants and strangers." A few days after, she wrote to the same friend that her husband's sufferings and death had interested so many persons in Leghorn, that she was as kindly treated and as much attended to, in regard to her health and the consolations which she needed, as if she were at home. "Indeed," she adds, "when I look forward to my unprovided situation, as it relates to the affairs of this life, I must often smile at their tenderness and precautions. Anna says, 'Oh,

mauma, how many friends God has provided for us in this strange land! for they are our friends before they know us;' and who can tell how great a comfort he provided for me when he gave her to me?" To divert her mind from its melancholy musings, and afford her an opportunity, during her brief stay in Italy, of extending her acquaintance with a country which abounded in so many curiosities of nature and of art, some of her friends induced her to accompany them to Florence. How she enjoyed the contemplation of the beautiful scenery around her, and the wonderful productions of human genius in that city of elegance and taste, will be seen from the following description of her visit in her own words:*

"Four days I have been at Florence, lodged in the famous palace of Medici, which fronts the Arno and presents a view of the high mountains of Morelli, covered with elegant country-seats, and five bridges across the river, which are always thronged with people and carriages. On Sunday, January 8, at 11 o'clock, I went with Mrs. Amabilia† to the chapel La Santissima Annunziata. Passing through a curtain, my eye was struck with hundreds of persons kneeling; but the gloom of the chapel, which is lighted only by the wax tapers on the altar, and a small window at the top darkened with green silk, made every object at first appear very indistinct, while that kind of soft and distant music which lifts the mind to a foretaste of heavenly pleasures called up in an instant every dear and tender idea of my soul, and, forgetting Mrs. A.'s company and all the surrounding scene, I sank on my knees in the first place I found vacant, and shed a torrent of tears at the recollection of how long I had been a stranger in the house of my God, and the

* This description is a journal which she prepared for the gratification of a beloved relative in America.

† The wife of Mr. Anthony Filicchi, of Leghorn.

accumulated sorrow that had separated me from it. I need not tell you that I said our dear service with my whole soul, as far as in its agitation I could recollect. When the organ ceased, and mass was over, we walked around the chapel. The elegance of the ceiling in carved gold, altars loaded with gold and silver and other precious ornaments; pictures of every sacred subject, and the dome a continued representation of different parts of Scripture: all this can never be conceived by description, nor my delight in seeing old men and old women, young women, and all sorts of people, kneeling promiscuously about the altar, as inattentive to us and other passers-by as if we were not there. On the other side of the church, another chapel presented a similar scene, but as another mass had begun, I passed on tip-toe behind Mrs. Filicchi, unable to look around, though every one is so intent upon their prayers and rosary that it is very immaterial what a stranger does.

"While Mrs. Filicchi went to make visits, I visited the church of St. Firenze, and saw two more elegant chapels, but in a more simple style, and had the pleasure of treading the sacred place with two of its inhabitants, as a convent is also part of the building. I saw a young priest unlock his little chapel, with that composed and equal eye as if his soul had entered before him. My heart would willingly have followed after; here was to be the best music, but at night, and no female could be admitted.

"I rode to the queen's gardens, where I saw olms and firs, with hedges of yew and ivy in beautiful verdure, and cultivated fields, appearing like our advanced spring. Indeed, it was not possible to look without thinking, or to think without my soul's crying out for those it loves in heaven or on earth. Therefore I was forced to close my eyes and lean against the carriage as if asleep; which the mild softness of the air and warmth of the sun seemed easily to

excuse. We stopped at the queen's country palace, and passed through such innumerable suites of apartments, so elegant that each was a new object of wonder; but Solomon's vanity and vexation of spirit was all the while in my head. Saw the queen twice; but, as little Anna says, she would not be known from any other woman but by the number of her attendants.*

"*Sunday evening.*—Mr. T—— C—— and Mrs. F. went to the opera. I had a good fire in my room, locked the door, and, with my dear Anna, books and pens, passed a happy evening for this world. When we said our dear service together, she burst into tears, as she has always done since we say it alone. She says, 'My dear papa is praising God in heaven, and I ought not to cry for him; but I believe it is human nature; is it not, mamma?' I think of what David said: 'I shall go to him, he cannot return to me.' Her conversation is dearer to me, and preferable to any I can have this side of the grave. It is one of the greatest mercies that I was permitted to bring her, for many reasons.

"*Monday morning, Jan. 9.*—Visited the gallery; but as my curiosity had been greatly excited by my Seton's descriptions, and the French having made great depredations, it did not equal my expectations. The chef-d'œuvre of D., a head scarcely to be distinguished from life, the Redeemer about twelve years of age—a Madonna—and the Baptist very young, were those that attracted me most. The statues in bronze were beautiful; but I, being only an American, could not look very straight at them. Innumerable curiosities and antiquities surrounded us on all sides. The

* By the treaty of Lunerville, in 1801, Tuscany became a kingdom under the Prince of Parma, who was styled King of Etruria. Upon his death, in 1803, his widow, Maria Louisa, assumed the government, as queen-regent during the minority of her son.

sacred representations were sufficient to engage and interest all my attention, and, as the French had not been covetous of those, I had the advantage of seeing them; but felt the void of him who would have pointed out the beauties of every object too much to enjoy any perfectly—'alone but half enjoyed.' My God! Went to the church of San Lorenzo, where a sensation of delight struck me so forcibly that I approached the great altar, formed all of the most precious stones and marbles that could be produced. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,' came into my mind with a fervor which absorbed every other feeling. It recalled the ideas of the offerings of David and Solomon to the Lord, when the rich and valuable productions of nature and art were devoted to his holy temple and sanctified to his service. Annexed to this is the chapel of marble, the beauty and work and richness of which might be supposed the production of more than mortal means, if its unfinished dome did not discover its imperfections. It is the tomb of the Medici princes. Monuments of granite, golden crowns set with precious stones, the polish of the whole which reflects the different monuments as a mirror, and the awful black Cosmos who are represented on the top of the monuments as large as life, with their crowns and sceptres, made my poor weak head turn, and I believe, if it had been possible that I should have been alone there, it would never have turned back again. I passed my evening again in my room with dear Anna. At half-past nine, Mr. C. took the trouble to come for me, to attend the opera, that I might hear some wonderful trio, in which the celebrated David was to show all his excellence; and as it would be over at ten, and Mrs. F. so much desired it, I went with hat and veil, instead of the masks they all wore. The opera-house is so dark that you can hardly distinguish the person next to you

Anna thought the singers would go mad, and I could not find the least gratification in their quavers; felt the full conviction that those who could find pleasure in such a scene must be unacquainted with real pleasure. My William had so much desired that I should hear this David, that I tried to be pleased; but not one note touched my heart. At ten, I was relieved from the most unwilling exertion I had yet made, and returned with redoubled delight to my pleasures, which were as the joys of heaven in comparison.

"*Tuesday, Jan. 10.*—I saw the church Santa Maria, and the queen's palace in which she resides. Every beauty that gold, damask of every variety, and India tapestry, can devise, embellished with fine statues, ceilings embossed with gold, elegant pictures, carpets, and floors inlaid with the most costly satin-woods, in beautiful patterns, tables inlaid with most precious orders of stone,—all combined to make the palace of Pitti a pattern of elegance and taste. So say the connoisseurs. For me, I am no judge, as O— says. A picture of the descent from the cross, nearly as large as life, engaged my whole soul; Mary at the foot of it expressed well that the iron had entered into hers, and the shades of death over her agonized countenance so strongly contrasted the heavenly peace of the dear Redeemer that it seemed as if his pains had fallen on her. How hard it was to leave that picture, and how often, in the few hours' interval since I have seen it, I shut my eyes, and recall it in imagination! Abraham and Isaac are also represented in so expressive a manner that you feel the whole convulsion of that patriarch's breast; and well for me that, in viewing those two pictures, my companions were engaged with other subjects—the dropping tears could be hid, but the shaking of the whole frame not so easily. Dear sister,

you had your sigh, in reflecting how truly you would enjoy them.

"*Wednesday, Jan. 11.*—This morning I have indeed enjoyed, in the anatomical museum and cabinet of natural history. The work of the almighty hand in every object—the anatomical rooms displaying nature in every division of the human frame—is almost too much for human nature to support. Mine shrank from it; but, recalling the idea of my God in all I saw, though so humiliating and painful to the view, still it was congenial to every feeling of my soul; and as my companion T. has an intelligent mind and excellent heart, which for the time entered into my feelings, I passed through most of the rooms uninterrupted in the sacred reflections they inspired. The pleasures to be enjoyed in the cabinet of natural history would require the attention of at least a month. In the short time I was allowed, I enjoyed more than I could have obtained in years out of my own cabinet of precious things. If I was allowed to choose an enjoyment from the whole theatre of human nature, it would be to go over those two hours again, with my dear brother P'ost as my companion. I visited the gardens called Boboli, belonging to the queen's residence; was well exercised in running up flights of steps in the style of hanging gardens, and sufficiently repaid by the view of the environs of Florence and the many varieties of beautiful evergreens with which this country abounds, and which prevent the possibility of reflecting that it is winter, except the cold and damp of their buildings remind you of it. If the Tuscans are to be judged by their taste, they are a happy people, for every thing without is very shabby, and within elegant. The exterior of their best buildings is, to appearance, in a state of ruin. I saw also the Academy of Sculpture and the Botanical Garden."

From these memoranda of Mrs. Seton's visit to Florence,

it is plain that she found in the curiosities of that city not only a source of rational enjoyment, but a subject of religious meditation. The sacred places inspired her with reverence, and raised her heart to God; the gorgeous decorations of his temples reminded her of that infinite grandeur and excellence to which every thing should be consecrated; the scriptural paintings carried her soul back with the liveliest emotions to the very scenes which they commemorated; even the productions of a purely secular art elevated her thoughts above the world. With a mind so intelligent, and so directed to spiritual reflection, she was prepared to receive the happiest impressions from the Catholic associations she had formed in Italy.

BOOK III.

Mrs. Seton's inquiry on the subject of religion—Efforts to enlighten her—Her sentiments and impressions—Departure for America—Disappointment and sickness—Her admiration of Catholicity—Visit to her husband's grave—The Monks Filicchi—Mrs. Seton leaves Italy—Sentiments during the voyage—Arrival in New York—Death of Miss Rebecca Seton—Mrs. Seton opposed in her religious views—The main point insisted on by Mr. Filicchi—Combated by Dr. Hobart—His abilities and standing—Arguments—Situation of Mrs. Seton's mind—Danger of her faith—Efforts of Mr. Anthony Filicchi—Consults Bishop Carroll—Mrs. Seton's interior struggles—Counsel and instruction of Mr. F. Filicchi—Mrs. Seton's trials and sentiments—Her resolution—Letter of Bishop Carroll—The final determination—Abjuration of Protestantism—Fervor in approaching the sacraments.

It is but natural to infer from the excellent qualities of Mrs. Seton, and particularly from her religious spirit and sincerity of heart, that she would become an object of charitable zeal among her new friends, and would herself be

inclined to seek information respecting a church the observances of which were now so prominently brought to her attention. The Catholic family whose generous hospitality she enjoyed did not hesitate to avail themselves of every favorable opportunity to enlighten her on so important a subject. To some question which she proposed to Mr. Filicchi, respecting the difference of religions, he replied that there was but one true religion, and without a right faith no one could be acceptable to God. "Oh my, sir," replied Mrs. Seton, "if there is but one faith, and nobody pleases God without it, where are all the good people who die out of it?" "I don't know," answered her friend; "that depends on what light of faith they had received; but I know where people go, *who can know the right faith, if they pray and inquire for it, and yet do neither.*" "Much as to say, sir, you want me to pray and inquire, and be of your faith?" said Mrs. Seton, laughing. "Pray and inquire," he added; "that is all I ask of you." While she was at Florence, Mr. Anthony Filicchi urged upon her the duty of investigating the question in the following words:—

"Your dear William was the early friend of my youth. You are now come in his room. Your soul is even dearer to Antonio, and will be so forever. May the good, Almighty God enlighten your mind and strengthen your heart, to see and follow in religion the surest, true way to the eternal blessings. I shall call for you. I must meet you in paradise, if it is decreed that the vast plains of the ocean shall soon be betwixt us. Don't discontinue, in the meanwhile, to pray; to knock at the door." In order the more effectually to remove the erroneous views of Christianity which she had derived from education, her friends placed in her hands suitable books for her instruction, and made her acquainted with a learned Jesuit of Leghorn, who took a lively interest in her welfare. In a letter to one of her relatives, she thus

amiably alludes to this circumstance:—"I am hard pushed by these charitable Romans, who wish that so much goodness should be improved by a conversion, which to effect they have even taken the trouble to bring me their best-informed priest, Abbé Plunkett, who is an Irishman; but they find me so willing to hear their onlightened conversation, that consequently, as learned people like to hear themselves best, I have but little to say, and as yet keep friends with all, as the best comment on my profession." At first, Mrs. Seton little imagined that there was a more secure way to heaven than that which she had been taught to follow; but to a person of her intelligence and uprightness the crudeness of Protestantism could not but suggest its character of uncertainty, and she therefore prayed to God that, if she had not the happiness of being in the way that was pleasing to him, he would graciously lead her into the right path. She daily implored the divine light and assistance, repeating, in the words of Pope:—

"If I am right, thy grace impart
Still in the right to stay;
If I am wrong, oh, teach my heart
To find the better way!"

The grace of God was not wanting. It gradually unfolded to her view the superior claims of Catholicity, the truth and consolations of its faith. In entering a Catholic church, she felt an impression of awe that she had never experienced in a Protestant place of worship; and the following incident will show how her mind, under the influence of a heavenly light, began to penetrate through the mists which had clouded her religious views. Having accompanied her friends to the church of Montanero, in a lovely part of the country where Mr. Filicchi had been once concealed by the inmates of the convent during some political revolution,

they were invited to hear mass in their chapel. During the service, at the very moment of the elevation of the sacred Host, a young Englishman who was present observed to Mrs. Seton:—"This is what they call their real presence." "My very heart," she says, "trembled with pain and sorrow for his unfeeling interruption of their sacred adoration; for all around was dead silence, and many were prostrated. Involuntarily I bent from him to the pavement, and thought secretly on the words of St. Paul, with starting tears, 'they discern not the Lord's body;' and the next thought was, how should they eat and drink their own damnation for not discerning it, if indeed it is not there? And how did he breathe my soul into me? and how, and how a hundred other things I know nothing about? I am a mother; so the mother's thought came also. How was my God a little babe in the first stage of his mortal existence in Mary? But I lost these thoughts in my babes at home, which I daily longed for more and more."

By the dispensation of Providence, the ardent desire of Mrs. Seton to be reunited to her family in America was not to be realized as soon as she expected. On the 3d of February, she and her daughter embarked for their native country in the same vessel which had conveyed them to Italy. "We had parted," she says, "with our most kind friends, loaded with their blessings and presents; I with gold and passports and recommendations, for fear of Algerines or necessity to put in any of the Mediterranean ports; but all that in vain. A driving storm at night struck the vessel against another, and in the morning, instead of hoisting sail for America, we were obliged to return on shore; most kindly, indeed, welcomed by the Filicchi, but heart down enough at the disappointment; and imagine the rest, when our sweetest Anna, unable to hide her suffering, was found in high fever, covered with eruptions, which the doctor pro-

nounced scarlet." Notwithstanding the illness of her child, Mrs. Seton would have ventured upon the voyage with the first fair wind, and trusted the issue to God; but as the prospects of the vessel would have been injured by sickness among the passengers, she was obliged to remain at Leghorn. On returning from the vessel, she and her daughter had been conducted by Mr. Anthony Filicchi to his residence, where they were welcomed with unbounded kindness and hospitality, and invited to remain until their departure for America. After the recovery of Miss Anna Seton from her illness, which lasted three weeks, her mother was seized with the same complaint, which confined her for the same period to her room. During all this time, the most devoted attentions were bestowed upon them by their Italian friends, who displayed, in their regard, a brilliant example of Christian charity. "Oh, the patience," exclaims Mrs. Seton, "and more than human kindness of these dear Filicchis for us! You would say it was our Saviour himself they received in his poor and sick strangers." Thus detained in the midst of a family equally pious and enlightened, she possessed every facility of becoming intimately acquainted with the doctrines and consolations of the Catholic faith, and her letters show that she did not neglect this valuable opportunity. "How happy would we be," she writes to a friend, "if we believed what these dear souls believe—that they possess God in the sacrament, and that he remains in their churches, and is carried to them when they are sick! Oh, my! when they carry the blessed sacrament under my window, while I feel the full loneliness and sadness of my case, I cannot stop the tears at the thought. My God! how happy I would be, even so far away from all so dear, if I could find you in the church as they do, (for there is a chapel in the very house of Mr. Filicchi,) how many things I would say to you of the sorrows of my heart and the sins of my life! The other day,

in a moment of excessive distress, I fell on my knees, without thinking, when the blessed sacrament passed by, and cried in an agony to God to bless me if he was there; that my whole soul desired only him. A little prayer-book of Mrs. Filicchi's was on the table, and I opened a little prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin, begging her to be our mother; and I said it to her, with such a certainty that God would refuse nothing to his mother, and that she could not help loving and pitying the poor souls he died for, that I felt really I had a mother; which you know my foolish heart so often lamented to have lost in early days. From the first remembrance of infancy, I have always looked, in all the plays of childhood and wildness of youth, to the clouds for my mother; and at that moment it seemed as if I had found more than her, even in tenderness and pity of a mother. So I cried myself to sleep on her heart." On another occasion she writes to the same relative, exhibiting the progress of her mind in the knowledge of religious truth:—"This evening, standing by the window, the moon shining full on Filicchi's countenance, he raised his eyes to heaven, and showed me how to make the sign of the cross. Dearest Rebecca, I was cold with the awful impression my first making it gave me. The sign of the cross of Christ on me! Deepest thoughts came with it of I know not what earnest desires to be closely united with him who died on it—of that last day when he is to bear it in triumph; and, did you notice, my dear one, the letter T, with which the angel is to mark us on the forehead, is a cross. All the Catholic religion is full of those meanings, which interest me so. Why, Rebecca, they believe all we do and suffer, if we offer it for our sins, serves to expiate them. You may remember, when I asked Mr. Hobart what was meant by fasting, in our prayer-book,—as I found myself on Ash-Wednesday morning saying so foolishly to God, 'I turn to you in fasting, weeping, and mourn-

ing,' and I had come to church with a hearty breakfast of buckwheat-cakes and coffee, and full of life and spirits, with little thought of my sins,—you may remember what he said about its being old customs, &c. Well, the dear Mrs. Filicchi, who I am with, never eats, this season of Lent, till after the clock strikes three. Then the family assemble, and she says, she offers her weakness and pain of fasting for her sins, united with her Saviour's sufferings. I like that very much; but, what I like better, dearest Rebecca,—only think what a comfort,—they go to mass here every morning. Ah! how often you and I used to give the sigh, and you would press your arm in mine, of a Sunday evening, and say, 'No more until next Sunday,' as we turned from the church door which closed on us, (unless a prayer day was given out in the week.) Well, here they go to church at four every morning, if they please. And you know how we were laughed at for running from one church to another, sacrament Sundays, that we might receive as often as we could; well, here people that love God and lead a good, regular life, can go (though many do not do it—yet they *can* go) every day. Oh, my! I don't know how anybody can have any trouble in this world who believes all these dear souls believe. If I don't believe it, it shall not be for want of praying. Why, they must be as happy as angels, almost." Such was the lofty and just appreciation which Mrs. Seton formed of Catholic truth. In her new acquaintances at Lehigh she found not only the most generous friends, who did all that the most tender affection could devise to render her situation agreeable, but most intelligent and edifying members of the Church, whose conversation and example inspired her with the highest admiration for its faith and observances. In their company she would visit the sacred places, where she united with devotion in the different ceremonies of the Church, and poured forth her soul in fervent prayer. The

grace vouchsafed to her by the Spirit of truth would have led her at once to a formal retraction of Protestantism, had not her immediate departure from Italy prevented her from taking this step. In those sentiments she was about to embark for her native land. She could not, however, bid adieu to the country where the remains of her husband reposed without having paid a last tribute of affection to his memory. On the other hand, her heart expanded with joy at the prospect of being soon reunited to her family across the Atlantic. She thus expresses her feelings on this subject in a letter to her sister-in-law:—"Once more shall I hold my dear ones in my arms! Heavenly Father! what an hour will that be, my dear, fatherless children—fatherless to the world, but rich in God, their Father, for he will never leave us or forsake us. I have been to my dear Seton's grave, and wept plentifully over it, with the unrestrained affection which the last sufferings of his life, added to remembrance of former years, had made almost more than human. When you read my daily memorandums since I left home, you will feel what my love has been, and acknowledge that God alone could support it by his assistance through such proofs as have been required of it." As the time of her departure for home drew near, the more lively was the joy she experienced. The following sentiments were written by her a few days before she left Italy:—"Oh! joy, joy! Capt. B—— will take us to America: and only think of Mr. Filicchi's goodness. As this captain is a very young man and a stranger, and many things of war or danger might happen on the voyage, Mr. Filicchi will make it with us. Anna is wild with joy; yet often she whispers me:—'Ma, are there no Catholics in America? Ma, wont we go to the Catholic church when we go home?' Sweet darling, she is now out, visiting some of the blessed places with Mr. Filicchi's children and their governess. Would you believe, whenever we go to walk,

We go first in some church or convent-chapel as we pass, which we always foresee by a large cross before it, and say some little prayers before we go farther. Men do it as well as women. You know with us a man would be ashamed to be seen kneeling, especially of a week-day. Oh, my! but I shall be with you again: two days more and we start for home! This mild heavenly evening puts me in mind when so often you and I stood, or rather leaned on each other, looking at the setting sun; sometimes silent tears and sighs for that home where sorrow cannot come. Alas! how may I perhaps find mine?—sorrow plenty. I was speaking of it the other evening to Filicchi, and he said, in his dry English, 'My little sister, God the Almighty is laughing at you. He takes care of little birds and makes the lilies grow, and you fear he will not take care of you. I tell you he will take care of you.' So I hope, dearest Rebecca; you know that we used to envy them that were poor, because they had nothing to do with the world."

To crown all his acts of kindness to Mrs. Seton, and through regard for her husband, whom he had numbered among his cherished friends, Mr. Anthony Filicchi resolved to accompany her to the United States. A desire to see the country, and to attend personally to certain matters of business, had long made a visit to the New World an object of interest to him; but he was decided to undertake the voyage by the opportunity now presented of becoming a protector to Mrs. Seton. We will here remark that the Messrs. Filicchi, of Leghorn, were gentlemen of the highest standing in mercantile life, accomplished members of society, and ornaments of the religion they professed; and they deserve honorable mention in the biography of Mrs. Seton, not only for the generous friendship which they extended to her and her husband, but also on account of the important part which they bore in her conversion. They were men of noble im-

pulses and cultivated minds; and, although actively and extensively engaged in commercial pursuits, were not less the practical advocates of religion. The elder brother was remarkable for his sound judgment and extensive knowledge, and had enjoyed the especial confidence of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who consulted him on all questions of commerce. Christians in the full sense of the word, they felt a lively interest in the spiritual enlightenment of Mrs. Seton, who had become an object of their care, while they possessed the ability to guide her in the investigation of religious truth, and to remove much of the difficulty that was thrown in the way of her conversion. To aid her in this important work, Mr. Philip Filicchi had furnished her with books, and also with a manuscript from his own pen, containing a summary of Catholic faith and a brief exposition of the grounds on which it rests. This document, to which we shall refer more particularly in the sequel, may compare, in point of method and solidity, with the writings of our eminent controversialists, and reflects the highest honor upon his talents, learning, and zeal for religion.

Mrs. Seton having left us, in the form of a journal, the particulars of her departure from Leghorn, we will give the relation of those incidents in her own words:—

"The 8th of April, at half past four in the morning, my dear brother came to my room to awaken my soul to all its dearest hopes and anticipations. The heaven was bright with stars, the wind fair, and the *Piomingo's* signal exported to call us on board; meanwhile the tolling of the bell called us to mass, and in a few minutes we were prostrate in the presence of God. Oh, my soul, how solemn was that offering! for a blessing on our voyage—for my dear ones, my sisters, and all so dear to me—and, more than all, for the souls of my dear husband and father—earnestly our desires seconded with the blessed sacrifice, that they might find

acceptance through Him who gave himself for us; earnestly we desired to be united with Him, and would gladly encounter all the sorrows before us to be partakers of that blessed body and blood. Oh, my God, spare and pity me.

"We returned home with hearts full of many sensations; on my part, sorrow at parting with the friends who had been so kind to me and the dear little angels I tenderly love struggled with the joy of once more embarking for home; while I gave dear Amabilia a farewell embrace in the balcony the sun rose bright and glorious, and called our thoughts to that hour when the Sun of Righteousness would rise and reunite us forever.

"The signal had been given, the waterman waited for us, and my dear brother passed the struggle like a man and a Christian; dear, manly soul, it indeed appeared to me in the 'image of God.'

"Philip Filicchi and Carlton waited for us at the Health Office, and letters for America.

"Filicchi's last blessing to me was as his whole conduct had been—that of the truest friend. Oh, Filicchi, you shall not *witness against me*. May God bless you forever, and may you shine as the 'stars in glory' for what you have done for me!

"At eight o'clock, was quietly seated with little Ann and dear Antonio, on the quarter-deck. The anchor weighed, sails hoisted, and dear 'yo, yo!' resounding on all sides, brought to remembrance the 2d of October, 1803, with a force as strong as could be borne: most dear Seton, where are you now? I lose sight of the shore that contains your dear ashes, and your soul is in that region of immensity where I cannot find you. My Father and my God! and yet I must always love to retrospect thy wonderful dispensations: to be sent so many thousand miles on so hopeless an errand; to be constantly supported and accompanied by thy consoling

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mercy through scenes of trial which nature alone must have sunk under; to be brought to the light of thy truth, notwithstanding every affection of my heart and power of my will was opposed to it; to be succored and cherished by the tenderest friendship, while separated and far from those that I loved: my Father and my God, while I live let me praise—while I have my being let me serve and adore thee.”

During the voyage to America, which occupied fifty-six days, Mrs. Seton conversed frequently with Mr. Filicchi on the superiority of Catholicity over Protestantism, and found manifest pleasure in uniting with him in the exterior practices of religion, as prayer, fasting, and the observance of the festivals. A portion of her time was daily allotted to the reading of the lives of the saints. By these holy exercises did she endeavor to obtain an increase of divine grace, and to fortify herself for the conflict she was about to endure. If she looked forward with joy to the happiness of again embracing her children, her soul shuddered at the prospect of the opposition which her newly-acquired sentiments on religion were about to excite against her. It was plain, however, that, although she dreaded the contest, she was not disheartened, because she knew that in the event of her joining the Catholic church she would be richly compensated for any loss of worldly friends by the peace and comfort which the consciousness of duty would impart. Her chief source of anxiety in this respect seems to have proceeded from the intimate friendship that existed between her and the Rev. John Henry Hobart, her Protestant pastor, who subsequently was made bishop of the Episcopal Church in the State of New York. While on her way home, the anticipation of losing his esteem and severing the tie that had so long united her to him presented itself with a saddening influence to her mind. “As I approach to you,” she

says, “I tremble; and while the dashing of the waves and their incessant motion picture to me the allotment which God has given me, the tears fall fast through my fingers at the insupportable thought of being separated from you; and yet, my dear H., you will not be severe; you will respect sincerity, and though you will think me in error, and even reprehensible, in changing my religion, I know that heavenly Christian charity will plead for me in your affections. You have certainly, without my knowing it, been dearer to me than God, for whom my reason, my judgment, and my conviction, used their combined force against the value of your esteem. The combat was in vain, until I considered that yourself would no longer oppose, or desire so severe a struggle which was destroying my mortal life, and, more than that, my peace with God. Still, if you will not be my brother—if your dear friendship and esteem must be the price of my fidelity to what I believe to be the truth,—I cannot doubt the mercy of God, who, by depriving me of my dearest tie on earth, will certainly draw me nearer to him; and this I feel confidently from the experience of the past, and the truth of his promise, which can never fail.”

While Mrs. Seton thus prepared herself for the opposition which she had reason to expect in consequence of the change in her religious sentiments, another severe trial awaited her on her arrival in America. She landed at New York, in company with her daughter and Mr. Filicchi, on the 4th of June, when she discovered that Miss Rebecca Seton, her sister-in-law, whose virtues had rendered her an object of unbounded admiration, was on the verge of the grave. She thus expresses the mingled feelings of joy and sadness which she experienced in being again united to her family:—

“June 4, 1804.—Do I hold again my dear ones in my bosom?—has God restored all my treasure, even the little soul I have so long contemplated an angel in heaven? Nature

erics out they are fatherless, while God himself replies, 'I am the Father of the fatherless and the helper of the helpless.' My God, well may I cling to thee, for whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom upon earth beside thee? My heart and flesh fail, but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

"My soul's sister came not out to meet me. She too had been journeying fast to her heavenly home; her spirit now seemed only to await the consoling love and tenderness of her beloved sister to accompany it in its passage to eternity; to meet her who had been the dear companion of all the pains and all the comforts, of songs of praise and notes of sorrow; the dear, faithful, tender friend of my soul through every varied scene of many years of trial, gone—only the shadow remaining, and that in a few days must pass away! The home of plenty and comfort, the society of sisters united by prayers and divine affections, the evening hymns, the daily readings, the sunset contemplations, the service of holydays together, the kiss of peace, the widow's visits—all, all gone forever! And is poverty and sorrow the only exchange? My husband, my sister, my home, my comforts—poverty and sorrow. Well, with God's blessing, you too shall be changed into dearest friends. To the world you show your outward garments, but through them you discover to my soul the palm of victory, the triumph of faith, and the sweet footsteps of my Redeemer, leading direct to his kingdom; then let me gently meet you, be received in your bosom, and be daily conducted by your counsels through the remainder of my destined journey. I know that many divine graces accompany your faith, and change the stings of penance for ease of conscience, and the solitude of the desert for the society of angels. The angels of God accompanied the faithful when the light of his truth only dawned in the world. And now that the day-spring from on high has

visited and exalted our nature to a union with the Divinity, will these beneficent beings be less associated or delighted to dwell with the soul that is panting for heavenly joys and longing to join in their eternal alleluias? Oh, no! I will imagine them always surrounding me, and in every moment will sing with them, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! heaven and earth are full of thy glory.'"

On the 18th of the following month, death deprived Mrs. Seton of this cherished friend. Speaking of the event, she says:—"This is my Rebecca's birthday in heaven. No more watching now, my darling sister—no more agonizing sufferings. The hourly prayers, interrupted by pains and tears, are now exchanged for the eternal alleluiah. The blessed angels, who have so often witnessed our feeble efforts, now teach your soul the songs of Sion. Dear, dear soul, we shall no more watch the setting sun on our knees, and sigh our soul to the Sun of Righteousness, for he has received you to his everlasting light; no more sing praises gazing on the moon, for you have wakened to eternal day; that dear voice, that soothed the widow's heart, admonished the forgetful soul, inspired the love of God, and only uttered sounds of love and peace to all, shall now be heard no more among us; but the reward of those who lead others to righteousness now crowns his promise who has said, 'They shall shine as the stars forever.'"

Indoctrinated as Mrs. Seton was in the principles of the Catholic faith, she could not witness the death of one even so beloved and so remarkable for her religious spirit as her sister-in-law, without being struck with the contrast between the empty resources of Protestantism, and the superior advantages of Catholicity, in soothing the last and most trying hour of existence. In a letter to a friend at Leghorn,* after

* Mrs. Amabilia Filicchi, wife of the gentleman who had accompanied Mrs. Seton from Italy.

mentioning the demise of Miss Rebecca Seton, she adds:—"Not to stop on all that, which at last is all in order, since it is the will of our God, I will tell you what I know you have at heart to know, that the impressions of your example, and the different scenes I passed through in Leghorn, are far from being effaced from my mind,—which indeed could not, even in the most painful moments of attendance on my beloved Rebecca, help the strong comparison of a sick and dying bed in your happy country, where the poor sufferer is soothed and strengthened at once by every help of religion,—where the one you call the father of your soul attends and watches it in the weakness and trials of parting nature, with the same care you and I watch our little infant's body in its first struggles and waits on its entrance into life. Dearest Rebecca, how many looks of silent distress have we exchanged about this last passage—this exchange of time for eternity! To be sure, her uncommon piety and innocence, and sweet confidence in God, are my full consolation; but I mean to say, that a departing soul has so many trials and temptations, that, for my part, I go through a sort of agony never to be described, even while to keep up their hope and courage I appear to them most cheerful. Oh my! forgive these melancholy words; they were here before I knew it. Your day and mine will come too—if we are but ready! The children all asleep—this my time of many thoughts."

Though the loss of relatives and friends, endeared to her by the strongest ties of affection, was a severe affliction to the heart of Mrs. Seton, she had to pass through an ordeal far more painful to nature. The time had now arrived for a long and difficult struggle between the artifices of error on the one hand and the inspirations of divine grace on the other.

On her leaving Leghorn, Mr. Philip Filicchi gave her a letter of introduction to the Rt. Rev. Dr. Carroll, then

Bishop of Baltimore, whose acquaintance he had formed in America, hoping that, by the advice and instruction of that distinguished prelate, the religious impressions she had received in Italy would be brought to a happy maturity. He thus speaks of Mrs. Seton:—"Having remarked that she added to all her other good qualities a very pious and religious disposition, in a degree far superior to what I ever had observed in people of her persuasion,—having considered the exactness with which she fulfilled the duties of wife and mother,—and having been led to presume in her character an uncommon docility,—I was struck with the idea that Providence had arranged the plan of her voyage to Italy for the particular purpose of giving her an opportunity of rectifying the prejudices entertained against our religion, of enlightening her mind, and of granting her the blessing of discovering the true Church and being made a member of it. While I indulged this hope and considered in discreet silence all these things, she discovered to me that I was not deceived." After stating that she requested him to give her every information on the subject, he adds:—"I seconded her views with pleasure and awe—with pleasure for the good I hoped from it, and awe for my unworthiness in executing such an office; for want of ability and learning I was encouraged by the consideration that Providence often employs feeble instruments, that its own power and glory may shine the more. I gave her all the information I could; my words seemed to conquer her natural prejudices and enlighten her understanding. To supply the defects of my knowledge, I procured for her the best books I could find, and particularly Bossuet's Exposition of the Catholic Doctrine. I recommended her to pray and to consult those who had a mission to instruct. I promised her to solicit your charity for affording her the instructions I was not able to give, for regulating her conduct and conciliating with her

duty as a Christian that regard which the particular circumstances of her situation may require. All this I solicit from your goodness in her favor, and for the honor of Him who has called you to feed part of his sheep."

Had Mrs. Seton consulted without delay the distinguished prelate who then presided over the Catholic Church in the United States, who would probably have been spared much of the doubt and perplexity which soon took possession of her mind. But, unfortunately, she had been advised by Mr. Filicchi to inform her Protestant pastor and friends of her objection to their communion; and her observance of this advice, although prompted by the best motives, necessarily excited against her better views of religion a storm of opposition calculated to shake her firmness, if not altogether to withdraw her from the path on which she had entered. She had been justly led, by the instructions of Mr. Filicchi and the books which she had perused, to consider the Protestant religion as the offspring of human passion, and possessing no power or ministry from Christ. It had been the aim of her friends in Italy to impress chiefly on her mind that fundamental article of Christianity, that the Church alone is the depository of revealed truth, and commissioned by her Divine Founder to guide man in the way of salvation. In the manuscript which Mr. Filicchi placed in her hands, as we have already stated, he dwells principally on this important point. After stating the doctrine of the Church, as contained in the creed of Pope Pius IV., he observes:—"The above profession contains all our belief. I do not decline making appropriate observations upon its various parts, though, if one point were well understood, the discussion of all the others would be unnecessary;—I mean the authority of the Church to interpret the sense of the Scriptures. I shall therefore begin with this; and, after some brief remarks on the remaining points, will refer you for a better explanation of them to the books

I have given you. Truth does not fear discussion; but truth can only be made manifest by the grace of God, which is only granted to the humble of heart, to those who seek it sincerely, who do not depend on their own light and knowledge for the finding of it, who pray to obtain it, and who do not seek it through a vain curiosity. Herod was curious to see a miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; but his curiosity was not gratified.* 'Ask, and it shall be given unto you,' says our Lord.† 'Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight,' exclaims Isaiah.‡ After this short exhortation respecting the means you must adopt to be made worthy of knowing the truth and the dangers you are to avoid in the search of it, I come to the point in question." After remarking that Protestants and Catholics both agree in asserting the obligation of believing whatever is contained in the Old and New Testament, he continues his argument in this form. "If we are bound to believe, we must know what is entitled to our belief. Who will teach us this science? The Bible, without an authorized interpreter, cannot do it, since they who appeal only to this source are divided into a thousand jarring sects. The Bible must be legitimately expounded. Hence, our Saviour not only imposed the obligation of believing, but established a Church, for the purpose of guarding and transmitting his holy faith. Protestants themselves admit this. But where is that Church that Christ established, as the pillar and ground of truth? It is not the Protestant Episcopal Church, for this dates its commencement only from the sixteenth century, whereas the Church of Christ is coeval with the apostolic age. It is indeed pretended that the reformers merely rejected the errors that had been introduced into the Church; but, in this case, it is plain that either St. Paul and Christ

* Luke III. 8

† Luke XI. 9.

‡ Isaiah v. 21.

himself were deceived when they pronounced the Church to be the pillar of truth and unwavering in its faith to the end of time, or the Protestant Episcopal sect is in error." This reasoning, which leads to the conclusion that the Catholic Church is the authority established by Christ, as the herald of his doctrine, is lucidly developed, and followed by a brief vindication of the several points contained in the creed of Pius IV.

Mrs. Seton having been led to abandon her early views of religion by her conviction of the unfounded pretensions of the Protestant Episcopal Church, all the efforts of her friends at home were directed to the removal of this impression, and every possible influence was exerted to effect a change in her sentiments. The Rev. Mr. Hobart, already mentioned, was the most active in endeavoring to move her from the position she had taken; and, if we consider the talents and address which he had at his command, she could not have met with a more formidable opponent. He was a man of amiable character and practical ability, active and unwearied in the duties of his profession, and enjoyed a high reputation as a preacher. "He had all the mental and moral qualities which make men leaders of their fellows. Undaunted, ready, and sagacious, he never abandoned a principle, deserted a friend, or quailed before an enemy. 'The Church needs no abler representative,' remarked a lawyer, who had heard him in debate; 'he has all the talents of a leader; he is the most parliamentary speaker I ever met with; he is equally prompt, logical, and practical. I never saw that man thrown off his countenance.'"^{*} From these qualities of Mr. Hobart we may infer that all the resources that Protestantism could command, were brought to bear against Mrs. Seton's preferences for Catholicity. Add to

^{*} Willberforce, *Hist. of Prot. Episc. Church in America*, ch. 12.

this, that the most intimate friendship, as we have seen, had existed between her and the popular, talented minister of Trinity Church. In order to wean her from her newly-acquired sentiments on religion, he undertook to refute the doctrinal treatise of Mr. Filicchi; and in a long letter which he addressed to her, he made an elaborate attempt to vindicate the claims of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and to prove that the Catholic Church had fallen into error, and was unworthy of obedience.⁽²⁾

In the conflict of mind which this discussion produced, she at first determined, in accordance with the advice of Mr. Filicchi, to apply for instruction to Bishop Carroll; and with this view she penned the following communication, which forms a succinct history of the matter up to that period:—

"REV. SIR:—

"The enclosed letter from Mr. Filicchi will acquaint you with the motive which leads me to take the liberty of addressing you. He has indeed most kindly befriended me, in endeavoring to enlighten and instruct my mind. The first impression I received from him, that I was in error and in a church founded on error, startled my soul, and decided me to make every inquiry on the subject. The books he put into my hands gave me an entire conviction that the Protestant Episcopal Church was founded only on the principles and passions of Luther, and consequently that it was separated from the church founded by our Lord and his apostles, and its ministers without a regular succession from them. Shocked at the idea of being so far from the truth, a determination of quitting their communion and uniting myself with yours became the earnest desire of my soul, which, accustomed to rely supremely on divine grace, was easily satisfied on those points of difference and pecu-

liarity in your Church, when it was once persuaded that it was the true one. Under those impressions it remained until my arrival in New York. It was my friend Filicchi's wish, and a respect due to those pastors and friends from whom I had received my first principles and affections, to state my objections to their communion; but I assure you that in the belief of those first objects I mentioned, (that they proceeded from Luther, and were without a regular succession from Christ and his apostles,) I felt my soul so determined that it appeared a wicked insincerity to give them any hope of changing me; when to my great astonishment they give me the most positive testimony that I have been deceived in those points. You will naturally observe to me, that I must have expected an opposition where parties are opposed. Certainly; and had the opposition rested on transubstantiation or any point of faith, be assured that my faith would not have stopped at any point that your Church has yet proposed to me. But in the decided testimonies that are given me by the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, that they are a true church, I acknowledge that the foundation of my Catholic principles is destroyed, and I cannot see the necessity for my making a change. It is necessary to inform you that I have felt my situation in the most awful manner, and, as the mother and sole parent of five children, have certainly pleaded with God earnestly, and, I may strictly say, incessantly, as it has been the only and supreme desire of my soul to know the truth. I know that I have, besides the errors of a corrupt nature, added many sins to the account he has with me: indeed, often, in the struggles of my soul, I should have thought myself deservedly forsaken by him, had I dared to impeach his mercy to one who desires above all things to please him and has the greatest sorrow for having offended him. Indeed, all other sorrow is joy to me, and in the many severe

trials he has been pleased to send me, I have feared nothing but the evil of losing his favor. With the sincerity with which I lay my heart before him, I must declare to you that I feel my mind decided in its original sentiments respecting my religion. Mr. Filicchi, who has accompanied me to America, has requested me to make this statement to you; and I have promised him to defer every further step until you will favor me with an answer, and must entreat you to consider that my present divided situation from every communion is almost more than I can bear, and that it will be an act of the greatest charity to forward your sentiments as soon as your leisure will permit."

At the time that Mrs. Seton prepared this communication to Bishop Carroll, Mr. Anthony Filicchi also wrote to the bishop, enclosing a letter of introduction from his brother, both with a view to make himself known to him, and to solicit his co-operation in the difficulties which impeded Mrs. Seton's progress in the way of truth. He says:—"Your good advice in so important a matter is anxiously expected, and I doubt not of your earnest attention to it, and of an invincible direct reply to the different statements and observations contained in the papers of one of those Protestant ministers (Mr. Hobart) against those delivered by my brother to Mrs. Seton, which both I think proper to convey to you in their original, to be returned after perusal. By the advice of Rev. Mr. O'Brien,* I have meanwhile put into the hands of Mrs. Seton the book, 'England's Conversion and Reformation,' composed and printed in Dublin, which she will certainly read with the requisite attention,—her only wish, her only intent, being to know and act right for herself and for her children, independent of whatever

* Assistant pastor of the Catholic Church in the city of New York.

worldly considerations." Such was the state of things at the date of this letter, July 26, 1804. But before it was sent to Bishop Carroll, Mrs. Seton's Protestant friends had prevailed upon her not to perplex her mind with further controversy. At the instance of Mr. Filicchi, she had determined at first to await the answer of the bishop; but it appears that she afterward concluded to hasten the decision of the question, as in the same letter of Mr. Filicchi, mentioned above, he says, in the postscript:—"I have left with Rev. Mr. O'Brien the manuscripts in question, who has promised me that he will be able for this same evening to have them perused and answered."* This was unquestionably a critical moment for Mrs. Seton, her mind being in an agony of suspense, urged by the call of divine truth on the one hand, and trammelled and fettered on the other by the influence of those around her. Her happiness, as a child of the Church, now rested upon the uncertain issue of a controversy, which was the more doubtful in its result, as it was hurried to its close at a period when her mind was in a state of the greatest obscurity and agitation. Mr. Filicchi forwarded, in his letter to Dr. Carroll, the communication written by Mrs. Seton; but it is plain, from the circumstances just alluded to, that he enclosed it to the bishop merely to furnish him with a history of the whole affair, and not as a letter from Mrs. Seton. On the same day, July 26, he wrote to her as follows:—

"MY DEAR SISTER:—

"I have been, and always, wheresoever, before whomsoever, and before St. Peter himself, whose primacy it appears you are so decidedly prevailed upon to deny, shall be, ready to render justice from the bottom of my oppressed soul, to

* That is, the manuscript of Mr. Hobart.

the sincerity of your heart in the course you are about to follow in regard to your religion; but it will always, at the same time, stand clear above my eyes as a *fact*, that your mind is over-influenced by an unaccountable awe toward the friends of your old communion. Only intent to know the truth, you were ready to write, you had written yourself to Bishop Carroll, as the proper person to enlighten your mind, and you saw the propriety of conveying to him the original manuscript that had operated the change of your mind; but your old friends (they are surely not the best for it) come forward, do not think proper, do not choose to enter in any dispute, do not wish that your mind should be exposed to any more light, and immediately you are prevailed upon to give up your soul, your wishes, to their solicitations. Your now, neglected friends, you know, have followed the very opposite system, as it becomes the followers of truth. They have not urged, they have not limited you in any way, in any thing; and yet, if it was true—what your old pretended friends tried to insinuate to you—that our Church forbids investigation and commands an unreasonable faith, they could have been easily excused if they had acted differently; but that your priests, who call loudly for investigation,—who do not acknowledge any authority above the private reason of any human being,—should persuade you, as a sacred duty, to decline examination, is certainly above my comprehension. But she has, your pretended friends say, given up her mind; she is easy about what she was in doubt of before; that is enough for her conscience. I wish it could be so, for the sake of your soul, my dear sister: I share most cordially the struggles of your situation; but certainly it cannot be so for the conscience of your advisers. Your distracted mind and bleeding heart were equally made easy at Leghorn in a quite different way. Your own experience does not point you (to) the probable false security in which they would insist that

you should remain. My virtuous friend, you repeatedly and solemnly promised me to wait for the result of my application to Bishop Carroll. I have this morning explained to him the anxiety of my soul and yours, and I cannot doubt of his best attention to both. Confirm me by your own handwriting, and you will better recollect the promise. This is the object of my present unusual address by letter to you.* It grieves me profoundly to keep your anxiety so awakened; but, according to my sacred principles and my most solid affection, how can I spare you, my worthy sister? I renew here in writing my solemn promise that I shall be in any event your most affectionate and sincere friend till my last breath, ready to do every thing in my power in your favor, for the best comfort of this mortal and unhappy life. In my absence from New York, or from America, my purest friendship will remain with you as long as I shall live, to be your unshaken support; and, to that effect, an honorable person will be pointed out to you, to whom you will be pleased you shall apply, in my name, in every emergency, without any compass or control but the extent of my sufficiency and your wants; and should I die before you, my brother, you know, will be happy to perform my wishes on his account. But as your own most dear existence, according to my principles as well as yours, ought to be readily sacrificed to the safety of your soul, you will, I am confident, beloved friend, pardon me if, on every occasion, I renew the fight to your most inward feelings, in hopes that it will please the most merciful Almighty God, at least in the last moment of your abode in this vale of tears, to send his Holy Spirit to you, and reunite us all in his heavenly kingdom.

* Mrs. Seton and Mr. Filicchi were then both at New York, and had personal interviews with each other. On this occasion he departed from what was usual, and wrote to her.

dom. You ought otherwise to positively forbid me to see or address you any more."

Whether it was this appeal to Mrs. Seton's better judgment, or a reply from the Rev. Mr. O'Brien to the manuscript of Mr. Hobart, that produced a more favorable impression on her mind, we are unable to say; perhaps both contributed to fortify her against the conclusive step which was suggested by her Protestant friends. Certain it is that she did not return professedly to her former communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church. She continued to investigate the subject and to pray for increased light and grace from heaven. In the mean time, Mr. Filicchi awaited with anxious interest the reply of Bishop Carroll; but, several weeks having passed away without any intelligence from Baltimore, he addressed the bishop a second letter, in which he urged him to comply with the request already made to assist Mrs. Seton with his advice, representing to him that this request regarded an affair of no smaller moment than the eternal salvation of a parent and her five children. At length, on the 22nd of August, Bishop Carroll's answer reached Mr. Filicchi at New York, who immediately communicated it to Mrs. Seton. He thus informs Dr. Carroll of the circumstance, in a letter dated Boston, 4th of October, 1804:—

"SIR:—

"Just the day before my long-delayed departure from New York, I was made happy with the honor of your kind letter of the 20th of August, and I went immediately out of town to communicate and leave it for perusal to the worthy lady who still labors under doubts and anxieties in her most sincere wish for truth. Behold how she expresses herself in her first letter to me, dated the 30th of August:—'This day

completed one week since my dear brother left me. I have thought of him incessantly: indeed, I cannot think of my soul without remembering you; and as certainly the greatest part of my days and nights are occupied in solitude and watching over that poor soul, consequently you are the constant companion of my thoughts and prayers. When I began the Litany of Jesus this afternoon, the plural number put it in my mind to say it for you also; and praying heartily for you made me resolve to write to my dear brother. The bishop's letter has been held to my heart, on my knees beseeching God to enlighten me to see the truth, unmixed with doubts and hesitations. I read the promises given to St. Peter and the sixth chapter every day, and then ask God can I offend him by believing those express words. I read my dear St. Francis, and ask, is it possible that I shall dare to think differently from him, or seek heaven any other way? I have read your *England's Reformation*, and find its evidence too conclusive to admit of any reply. God will not forsake me, Antonio: I know that he will unite me to his flock; and, although my faith is unsettled, I am assured that he will not disappoint my hope, which is fixed in his own word, that he will not despise the humble, contrite heart, which would esteem all the losses of this world as greatest gain, if it can be so happy as to please him. *September 2.*—I was willing to embrace an excuse for not going to town last Sunday, in compliance with your advice, and my brother Post came to visit me. Our conversation turned accidentally on the subject that engrosses my soul, and led me to an explanation with him, very interesting, and, I believe, surprising to him, as I fixed my argument on *literal words* rather than *human fancy*. His cool and quiet judgment could not follow the flight of my faith; but he was so candid as to admit that, if before God I believed the doctrine of the Church to be true, the errors or imperfections of its members could

not justify a separation from its communion. But still the hideous objects will present themselves which disturb my soul and unsettle my faith; and, though God is so gracious as to give me the fullest assurance that through the name of Jesus my prayers shall finally be answered, yet there seems now a cloud before my way that keeps me always asking him which is the right path. Indeed, my brother, when the remembrance of my sins and unholiness before God strikes my memory with their fullest convictions, I only wonder how I can expect from him so great a favor as the light of his truth, until the sorrow and penance of my remaining life shall invite his pitying mercy to grant it. Remember to pray for me. *Sept. 8.*—This is the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and I have tried to sanctify it, begging God to look on my soul and see how gladly I would kiss her feet, because she was his mother, and joyfully show every expression of reverence that even my Antonio would desire, if I could do it with freedom of soul which followed from knowledge of his will. Mr. Hobart was here for the first time yesterday, since your absence, and was so entirely out of all patience that it was in vain to show the letter. He says, "The Church is corrupt; we have returned to the primitive doctrine, and what more would you have when you act according to your best judgment?" I tell him, that would be enough for this world, but I fear for the next to meet another question. His visit was short, and painful on both sides. God direct me, for I see it is in vain to look for help from any one but him. *Sept. 12.*—Three of my children have the whooping-cough, and, as I watch them the greater part of the night, my prayers are often repeated. But oh, Antonio, when will my poor soul be worthy to be heard, and make its direct applications with that liberty of spirit which the light of truth alone can give to it? I repeat to you, pray for me. It will benefit us both; and, when you wish

to add a cordial drop of sweetness to my cup, write some of the thoughts of your soul.'

"Last week I received another letter from her, and to-day I receive a third, which both I take the liberty of enclosing to you in their originals, to give you an accurate idea of her merit and struggles. The earnest acknowledgment expressed in the beginning of her last letter of the 27th September relates to my proposal of sending her back with her children to Italy, in search of the lost quiet of her soul and mind. Sensible of her incapacity, particularly in a foreign language, in which I hardly can make myself intelligible, I suggested to her to address you herself with her doubts and questions. Your wise, holy instructions, in such a delicate and interesting case, direct or through me, are certainly the only adequate ones, and would most deeply gratify, sir, your most humble servant,

"ANTHONY FILICCHI."

We will here present at length the two letters of Mrs. Seton alluded to by her friend, exhibiting as they do a faithful picture of her soul at this time, her yearnings for the truth, and her struggles with the interior blindness which it pleased Divine Providence to send her, and with the outward difficulties which she met with from the efforts of her Protestant friends:—

"Sept. 19, 1804.

"MY MOST DEAR BROTHER:—

"You say you must know all my concerns, interior and exterior. As for the latter, they are easily related. I have seen no one since I wrote to you but my Philadelphia friend, Mrs. Scott, whose tenderness to me is unremitted; Mrs. Sedler, who cannot enter into the spirit of our cause; and Captain Blagg, who came to offer his services, if I had

any commands in Leghorn or Paris. Mr. Hobart, and all the other *missioners*, have left me to my contemplations, or rather to my 'best judgment,' I suppose,—but, I rather hope, —to God. So much for exterior, to which I only add, I am very well, though quite oppressed with fatigue occasioned by my poor little children's whooping-cough. In order to disclose to you the interior, I must speak to you as to God. To him I say, 'When shall my darkness be made light?' for really it would seem that the evil spirit has taken his place so near my soul that nothing good can enter in it without being mixed with his suggestions. In the life of St. Augustine I read that 'where he is most active, and obstacles seem greatest in the divine service, there we have reason to conclude that success will be most glorious.' The hope of this glorious success is all my comfort; for indeed my spirit is sometimes so severely tried it is ready to sink. This morning I fell on my face before God, (remember, I tell you all,) and appealed to him as my righteous Judge, if hardness of heart or unwillingness to be taught, or any human reasons, stood between me and the truth,—if I would not rejoice to cast my sorrows on the bosom of the Blessed Mary, to entreat the influence of all his blessed saints and angels, to pray for precious souls even more than for myself, and account myself happy in dying for his sacred truth, if once my soul could know it was pleasing to him. I remembered how much those exercises had comforted and delighted me at Leghorn, and recalled all the reasons which had there convinced me of their truth, and immediately a cloud of doubts and replies raised a contest in this poor soul, and I could only again cry out for mercy to a sinner, and implore His pity who is the source of life, light, and truth, to enlighten my eyes that I sleep not in death—that death of sin and error which with every power of my soul I endeavor to escape.

"After reading the life of St. Mary Magdalen, I thought, Come, my soul, let us turn from all these suggestions of one side or the other, and quietly resolve to go to that church which has at least the multitude of the wise and good on its side; and began to consider the first steps I must take. The first step—is it not to declare I believe all that is taught by the Council of Trent? and if I said that, would not the Searcher of Hearts know my falsehood and insincerity? Could you say that you would be satisfied with his bread, and believe the cup, which he equally commanded, unnecessary? Could you believe that the prayers and litanies addressed to our Blessed Lady are acceptable to God, though not commanded in Scripture, &c. &c.? By all which I find, and you, my Antonio, will be out of patience to find, that the *tradition* of the Church has not the true weight of authority in my mind. Do not be angry. Pity me. Remember the mixtures of truth and error which have been pressed upon my soul, and rather pray for me, than reproach me; for indeed I make every endeavor to think as you wish me, and it is only the most obstinate resistance of my mind that prevents my immediately doing also as you wish me; and all I can do is to renew my promise that I will pray incessantly, and strive to wash out with tears and penance the sins which, I fear, oppose my way to God. Again I repeat, pray for me."

On the 27th of September Mrs. Seton again wrote to Mr. Filicchi, as follows:—

"It is necessary to lay the restraint of discretion on my pen, while I thank you for your letter of the 20th, which, though but two hours ago received, has been already read over many times. The pen is restrained, but the heart, which is before God, blesses and adores him in unbounded thanksgiving for such a friend. Your goodness to me he only can reward. To answer you fully now would not be

proper in any way, especially as you see my poor soul is still more unsettled and perplexed from day to day, not from any failure in its prayers or entreaties to God, which are rather redoubled than neglected, but, like a bird struggling in a net, it cannot escape its fears and tremblings.

"This afternoon, after dismissing the children to play, I went to my knees in my little closet, to consider what I should do and how my sacred duty would direct. Should I again read those books I first received from Mr. Hobart? My heart revolted, for I know there are all the *black accusations*, and the sum of them too sensibly torments my soul. Should I again go over those of the Catholic doctrine, though every page I read is familiar to me, and my memory represents in rotation the different instructions and replies? Since your absence I have read the book your brother first gave me, and the one you also gave, with the most careful attention,—not only with attention, but always with prayer,—and now must look up to that as my only refuge, prayer at all times, in all places. Really, Antonio, my most dear brother, to whom I can speak every secret of my soul, I have prayed, and do pray so much, that it seems every thought is prayer; and when I awake from my short sleeps my mind seems to have been praying, and the poor eyes are really almost blind with incessant tears,—for can I pray for such a favor without a beating heart and torrents of tears? My children say, 'Poor mamma,' continually, and really are better than they were, that they may not add to my sorrow. Yet sweet are these tears, and sweet are the sorrows; great is my comfort, that, though the almighty Source of Light does not visit me with his blessed light, yet he does not leave me contented and insensible in my darkness.

"Sept. 20.—This day has been a feast-day to the children and a holiday from school, that I might give the greatest portion of the hours to God. You would have been pleased

to hear their questions about *St. Michael*, and how eagerly they listened to the history of the good offices done to us by the blessed angels, and of *St. Michael* driving *Lucifer* out of heaven, &c. They always wait on their knees after prayers till I bless them each with the sign of the cross, and I look up to God with an humble hope that he will not forsake us. I could tell you many things, my brother, but must wait for the much wished-for hour when we shall be seated with our big book at the table. I could cry out now as my poor Seton used to do, Antonio, Antonio, Antonio; but call back the thought, and my soul cries out, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; there it finds rest and heavenly peace, and is hushed by that dear sound, as my little babe is quieted by my cradle-song. The *Jesus Psalter*, in the little book you gave me, is my favorite office, because it so often repeats that name; and when thought goes to you, Antonio, and imagines you in the promiscuous company you must meet, without any solid gratification, fatigued by your excursions, wandering in your fancy, &c. &c., oh, how I pray that the Holy Spirit may not leave you, and that your dear angel may even pinch you at the hour of prayers rather than suffer you to neglect them! You charge me not to neglect the lives of the Saints, which I could not, if I would, for they interest me so much that the little time I can catch for reading is all given to them: indeed, they are a relaxation to my mind, for they lessen all my troubles and make them as nothing by comparison. When I read that *St. Austin* was long in a fluctuating state of mind between error and truth, I say to myself, Be patient, God will bring you home at last; and as for the lessons of self-denial and poverty, if *St. Francis de Sales* and the life of our dear Master had not before pointed out to me the many virtues and graces that accompany them, I should even wish for them, to be like those dear, dear saints, in any respect. Antonio, Antonio, why cannot my poor soul be satis-

fied that your religion is now the same that theirs then was? How can it hesitate?—why must it struggle?—the Almighty only can decide.”

After expressing her solicitude to hear from him, she continues:—

“I am ashamed of my own letters—they are all egotism but my soul is so entirely engrossed by one subject, that it cannot speak with freedom on any other. Day after day passes, and I see no one; indeed, I can say with perfect truth at all times, I prefer my solitude to the company of any human being, except that of my most dear Antonio. You know my heart, you know my thoughts, my pains and sorrows, hopes and fears. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and if I was your brother, Antonio, I would never leave you for one hour; but as it is, I try rather to turn every affection to God, well knowing that there alone their utmost exercise cannot be misapplied and most ardent hopes can never be disappointed. The idea you suggested to me of writing to Bishop Carroll was suggested by a good or an evil angel, immediately after your departure. The Protestants say I am in a state of *temptation*; you must naturally think the same. The Almighty is my defence in either case, not from any claim of mine, but through the name of Jesus Christ. Is it possible I can do wrong in writing to him, sanctioned by your direction? At least I will have a letter prepared by the time you come.”

It is plain, from the tenor of the preceding letters, that Mrs. Seton's mind was in a painful state of uncertainty, which continued to disturb and agitate her soul, although she possessed the most conclusive evidences in favor of the Catholic religion; and it seemed that Divine Providence permitted her to be thus the sport of conflicting sentiments, in order to render her ultimate triumph over error the more signal, and to disengage her affections the more perfectly

from creatures. The letter of Bishop Carroll to Mr. Filiochi, relative to her situation, was a source of great comfort to her under those circumstances. She was also very much encouraged and supported in her trials by the advice and exhortations which she received from Mr. Philip Filiochi, of Leghorn, brother of the gentleman just mentioned. After having been kindly instructed by him in Italy on the various points of Catholic doctrine, so far as to be convinced of their truth, she deemed it but proper to inform him of the subsequent trouble which had come over her mind and prevented her from declaring herself a member of the Church. The answer of her friend is equally indicative of his learning, piety, and wisdom; and, while it shows the valuable helps which the Almighty sent her at this critical period, may suggest to others those prudent counsels which will always be found useful in a situation like hers:—

“LEONORA, Oct. 17, 1844.

“DEAR MADAM:—

“I received yesterday by the *Mercury* yours of the 27th of July. I assure you, my dear Mrs. Seton, that in reading it I did not feel the slightest emotion of indignation, but my heart was deeply affected by the consideration of your danger. I wish I had been with you. My endeavors would have been devoted entirely to calm your anxiety. ‘Why art thou sorrowful, my soul? Trust in God,’—I would have taught you to repeat, with the royal prophet. You could not fail to meet with contradictions. I expected them. An imagination like yours, rendered so sensible by constant stretch, if I may use the expression, a great propensity to melancholy, are natural affections, which I dreaded might throw you in trouble. I was, however, in hopes to have furnished you with a remedy, by giving you that excellent treatise of the ‘Consolation of a Christian.’ I trusted

you would have learned that, as we cannot do a single good thing, not even form a good thought, of ourselves, we must throw ourselves entirely on the mercy of God; that he has the power and the will to help us, that we can do every thing with his succor, and that he will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength, as St. Paul assures us. I was in hopes that you would have retained the maxim that our Saviour wishes our salvation more than we can wish it ourselves. Your anxiety, therefore, is unreasonable, and your trouble a temptation. You pray to your Father, to your Creator, and to your Saviour, and you tremble. You do not know his goodness. These were not the sentiments that accompanied the prodigal child, nor Mary Magdalen. St. Paul, fallen from his horse and called by Him whom he knew not, did not trouble himself. He calmly said, ‘What will you have me to do?’ It is only in calm and tranquillity that we may do some good. It is only our enemy who delights in trouble, as trouble is his element. He knows that he cannot catch fish in clear water. You are perplexed—uncertain. Pray constantly and with fervor, but calmly. If you trouble yourself for being troubled, you will never find peace.

“The objections started by your divines have consoled me, because I have not seen any thing new in them; nothing I did not know before. It is the old cant masterly combatted in all ages. I shall have no difficulty to encounter in answering it to your satisfaction. I shall not need to study much. You must, however, be sensible that, as I answer your letter immediately after its receipt, I cannot do it now. I shall clear all your doubts by the return of the *Mercury*.

“I shall only say a few words on the most essential point, or the basis of the edifice. You say that your divines disclaim Luther and Calvin as their patriarchs—as the

authors of their Reformation, as they call it. Have they named you the man? But names are nothing to our purpose. Let us condemn them to oblivion. They deserve it. Do they deny that the Protestant Church, the Reformed Church, or the Church of England, began in the sixteenth century? If they do, have recourse to the history of England. I refer you to their own writers—to writers of their own profession. Can I be more generous or liberal? They add, that their church comes directly and uninterruptedly from Jesus Christ and the apostles, having had a constant succession of priests; but are they able to name you a number of them, a congregation of faithful, who, ten or twelve years before the Reformation, professed openly the same tenets they do now—who, for instance, had declared confession an abominable imposition, the invocation of saints idolatry, the sacrifice of the mass an abomination? They cannot. All their priests a few days before had said mass, had heard confessions, had invoked the saints. If these are errors, they did not belong to the true Church, because the Church of Christ could not err. Their succession, therefore, is of no use to their cause. Do not hastily trust them. Apply to me with that confidence you show for me, for which I thank you. I shall never betray it. Mark the difference between their conduct and mine, and you will judge who is led by the purest motives. They endeavor to frighten you, to force you to a hasty declaration; they threaten to make a public business of a private concern. Violence was never the characteristic of charity. Was this my conduct? Did I ever propose you any temporal benefit as an allurement? Did I take advantage of your docility to listen to my instructions, to hasten your decision? Did I not, on the contrary, restrain your ardor, that you might prove yourself? All this I have done, and not through a sentiment of indifference, because I am as zealous in the

cause as they may be; but surprise, threats, violence, are instruments I despise.

"I must warn you against an error I see you are subject to. You have suffered your poor brain to be distracted by controversies on the real presence and the invocation of saints. Do you expect to understand all the subaltern questions that may arise? If you are sick, you send for a doctor. Do you pretend to question him on every point of his medical science before you submit yourself to his prescriptions? You are satisfied to know that he is one of the best doctors in the place. Our prudence in temporal concerns may well be followed in our spiritual ones. The study of religion cannot, ought not to be complicated. You know that Jesus Christ has established a Church that cannot err, cannot fall, and of course cannot be subject to variation, nor begin at a period distant from that in which he lived among us. Seek therefore this Church. If you find it, submit yourself to her decisions without further inquiries. If God has a right over our actions and our desires, he must have an equal one over our understanding. Your submission will be reconcilable, even in those points you may not understand, because it is reasonable to trust in the word of a Church which is the column of firmness and truth. If we were obliged to extend our inquiries farther, few of us would have leisure for it, and none the talents.

"Pray be sincere in your desire of knowing the truth; do not listen to secondary and worldly considerations, and you will be enlightened.

"Have you ever made a reflection? It may tend to calm your apprehensions, though it is insufficient to make a good Catholic. All your divines admit that a Roman Catholic may be saved. What risk do you run, therefore, in the change? To put one's self on the safer side is certainly prudence. I shall write to you fully at leisure. Do not de-

prive me of your confidence. Open your heart. This will relieve you. You cannot displease me. I may help you, or pity you. I shall never cease to pray for you.

"Your affectionate and sincere friend,

"PHILIP FILICCHI."

It is impossible to imagine any thing more admirably adapted to the object in view than the wise instructions contained in the preceding remarks. In reading them we fancy ourselves listening rather to the exact and well-timed expositions of the learned and pious divine, than to the friendly advices given by a layman actively engaged in secular pursuits. The following letters from the same gentleman are filled with the same wisdom, which may be profitably read by all:—

"LENOX, Oct. 22, 1804.

"DEAR MADAM:—

"Enclosed is the duplicate of the letter I wrote you, the 17th inst., in answer to yours of the 27th July. I am become very uneasy, both for you and for myself, and I lament much more your imprudence and mine: yours, for having resisted the light that has shown you the precipice you have before your feet; mine, for having exposed you to it by restraining your first zeal. When you left us, no doubt remained in your mind. How imprudent was it, then, to submit your determination to the censure of people who could not be expected to do otherwise than oppose it, and introduce trouble and disquiet in your conscience, to deter you from it! In a spiritual concern you have followed only worldly prudence, which the gospel calls folly. You have acted as if you had thought that God was not to be obeyed without the consent and advice of your friends. You have met with the punishment you deserved. In lieu of that serenity you had acquired from the knowledge of truth, anxiety and trouble have taken possession of your mind.

Your heart is become weak and your resolutions fallen to nothing. Your understanding is clouded, and your intellect is full of darkness. Remember the answer that Jesus Christ gave to a man who acted like you:—'And another said, I will follow thee, Lord; but let me first take my leave of them that are at my house. Jesus said to him, No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' (St. Luke, at the close of the 9th chapter.) If in those people who had taken care to instruct you you had found any symptom of interested views, of duplicity, and of a desire to surprise you, your conduct might be justifiable; but you never saw any thing of it. You had clearly seen the contradictions that rendered your former persuasion very suspicious, and you had acknowledged them, viz.: first, The difficulty that is met with by all those who pretend to find a succession in the Protestant Church from the primitive Church under the apostles. All the Reformers having been first Roman Catholics, no Protestant Church having existed between the fifth century, from which they date our corruption, and the sixteenth, from which their reform is dated in all histories, they meet with an interruption that baffles all their efforts to fill up. Secondly, Their refusal to acknowledge the necessity of confession, and their directions to the ministers attending the sick to advise such a confession, and give absolution in consequence of it. Thirdly, To fancy a place of perfect tranquillity, where every soul must go and remain till the day of judgment, in spite of the declaration made by Jesus Christ to the converted thief, that he would be that very day in heaven with him; and several others which we examined together. After all this, you should have informed your friends that you had embraced another persuasion; but you should never have consulted them whether you were to do it. Your inquiry is reduced to this:—'Do you advise me to continue in that which I am

convinced is wrong, or very suspicious?" I tremble for you, but I tremble also for myself. I fear that an imprudent confidence in your apparent firmness may be placed to my account. Perhaps a secret pride made me trust in the power of my persuasions. The vanity of giving a proof to your friends that your change of religion could not be imputed to surprise made me prefer your delaying your act of retraction. I consider myself guilty of all this, and can only plead a sort of good intention.

"I had already told you that, while all your divines admit that a Roman Catholic may be saved, you need not trouble yourself; you were at any rate equally safe. But you know that our doctrine does not admit of reciprocity. As I have explained to you the motives, I need not repeat them. This only I say, that, independent of that infallibility which must be the characteristic of the Church of Jesus Christ, if we allow any to exist, the decisions of the Catholic Church as a mere civil body cannot be despised. Consider the number of its members, their reputation in all ages for talents and sanctity, the conformity of their sentiments, the antiquity of its establishment, and compare to it the youth of the Protestant world, the infinite variety of the doctrine preached by its greatest men, the contracted number of its followers, their acknowledgment of being subject to error, (though they pretend not to err in fact;) and decide if you can be tranquil on this most important point. Every man who tells me that the Church he advises me to become a member of is not infallible tells me in substance that I may be led into error. With this declaration I have not even his word for security. By his declaration that his Church is not infallible he has warned me of the danger. Can you be tranquil in such a persuasion? I should not believe you, if you were to answer in the affirmative.

'Should you propose these difficulties to your divines, (as

you have such a propensity to prefer their advice to the light you have received,) and they should for convenience sake say that they do not admit that a Catholic may be saved, or that they confess that the Protestant Church is infallible, I shall give you proofs to the contrary.

"As examples are sometimes more persuasive than reasoning, I enclose you a copy of the declaration of the Duchess of York. She was in your same situation, but she was more faithful to grace.

"'What must I do, my dear Filicchi?' I hear you say I pray,—pray incessantly, pray with fervor, and with confidence. Be sincere in your wish to know the truth and firm in your resolution to follow it. Never think of the consequences for what relates to your situation and family affairs. There is a Providence. Let therefore prayer be your only adviser. Abandon all others, if you believe me. You cannot ask without something being given you; you cannot knock and find the door always shut; you cannot seek, never to find. Sincerity, confidence, and perseverance in prayer, calmness and tranquillity in mind, courage and resolution in heart, a perfect resignation to Providence,—you cannot fail to succeed. Avoid the labyrinth of controversies. They will not make you wiser.

"In the paper I gave you, I only set down what was necessary for you to know. I did not pretend to answer all the difficulties started at different times by Protestants. I know them, and could have answered them, but my work would have been swelled to an immense size, and I had no time for it. Had I explained the futility of the objections you point out, I would not have improved much, because they would have started many others. It is easy to create difficulties when you lose sight of the main point. Is there any thing more certain than the existence of God? Still an atheist will tire out the patience of the most learned, by

the difficulties he can start in pretending to support his opinion. It is impossible to follow any man in the discussion of separate controversies. The sectaries of all denominations will always avoid discussing the main point. They will constantly lose sight of it to introduce other questions.

"May you be wise enough to see the snares and avoid them! I will say no more. God bless you.

"Your affectionate friend,

"PHILIP FILICCHI."

"LEHIGH, Dec. 18, 1841.

"DEAR MADAM:—

"The moment I received your letter of the 20th July, I wrote you a few hasty lines, endeavoring to ease your mind and to set aright your conscience. I promised you that by the return of the *Mercury* I would have cleared all your doubts, or rather shown you the falsehood of the arguments made use of by our opponents to disturb you from the determination of embracing the Catholic faith. Little I thought then that the yellow fever, which has visited us, would rob me of the moments I intended to devote to this task. This sickness, which alarmed our people and made almost a desert of this city by the great emigration it caused, induced the government to establish a board of health. I was pointed out as a member. I would not refuse to lend my assistance; and the services I have been obliged to render have taken up so much of my time (and you may suppose I had not a great deal of it to spare) that I am reduced to the last day, to the eve of the *Mercury's* departure, to attend to my promise. I do not despair, however, of success. As words and reasonings are of no avail if the grace of God does not give them the power of persuading, as this may be granted to the simplest observations as well as to the most learned arguments, I trust that the few remarks I have tried to make will be supported with that grace which I implore, and with

out which a learned treatise would be but the sound of a timbrel.

"I shall answer your queries in due succession:—

"First. They tell you that the Protestant Church has the right succession, they (your clergymen) having always been ordained by bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, and that they call themselves Protestants because they protested against the errors of the Church of Rome, which had deviated from the primitive Church—errors unknown to the first four ages of Christianity. They admit therefore—

"1. That the true Church must come in right succession from the apostles;

"2. That the Roman Catholic Church was, in the first four ages, the true Church.

"3. That the Protestant Church comes directly from the Roman Catholic Church.

"You will remember, and they have admitted it, that the true Church could not fall and could not err. The Protestant Reformation took place in the sixteenth century. The Church of Rome had fallen into error (according to their assertions) since the fifth century, and they omit to name a church that must fill a space of eleven centuries. That they might be right, it would have been necessary that their protestations against the errors of the Roman Church should have taken place the moment they appeared, so that they might be entitled to be considered as the followers of truth without deviation or interruption, and that we and not they might be censured as having separated from the general Church. Was this the fact? When the Protestants first appeared and declared the invocation of saints to be idolatry, confession an imposition, the sacrifice of the mass an abomination, the real presence a superstition, the invocation of saints, confession, mass, were the avowed tenets and the constant practice of the Church. Those very bishops who

ordained the first abettors of the Reformation followed that doctrine, and the first reformers themselves a few days before said mass, heard confessions, &c. If all these things were errors, the bishops who ordained them had erred—they (the reformers) had erred themselves—the whole Church had erred. The supposed existence of these errors destroys the possibility of the uninterrupted succession of the true Church. It is therefore true, and most true, as I told you before,—viz.: that if they acknowledged their succession from the Roman Church, (a fact they cannot deny,) they must confess that, if this Church had erred for the space of eleven centuries, it could not be the Church of Jesus Christ, and their very succession proves a vitiated origin, and, of course, a false establishment. If, on the contrary, the Roman Church was the true Church, it could not err, and the reformation of its doctrine was both useless and impious.

"You will constantly observe that the Protestants are very careful to avoid this dilemma. They will never give you a straight answer on this subject. They will immediately change the theme, propose other arguments, and draw your attention from the principal point.

"They have moreover imposed on you, and taken advantage of your ignorance of ecclesiastical history, when they have told you that the first four ages knew not and practised not the things they call Popish errors. I shall content myself with exposing the infidelity of their accounts in a few instances. They will then be considered by you as false guides, and the little I shall say will be sufficient to enlighten you, if God grants power to my pen.

"Your clergymen abominate the sacrifice of the mass. St. Justin, who lived about fifty years after the death of the apostle St. John, praises the sacrifice of the Eucharist, and says that it was offered by Christians throughout the world

"St. Irenæus, disciple of St. Polycarp, who had been disciple of the apostle St. John, bears the same witness.

"Tertullian, who lived in the second age, assures us that the sacrifice was offered among Christians for the health and preservation of the emperors. In advising women to retirement, he says, that to visit the sick, to assist at the sacrifice, and to hear the word of God, were the only motives that should induce them to go out of their houses. He assures us that the sacrifice was offered for the dead, the anniversary day of their death.

"St. Cyprian, who lived in the third age, declares that the practice of offering the sacrifice for the dead was general and ancient.

"You see therefore that the doctrine relative to the sacrifice and to purgatory was known and admitted before the fifth age.

"The Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, which is attributed to St. James, is worded thus:—'Grant, O God, that our oblation may be found acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Ghost for the propitiation of our sins and for the repose of those who departed before us.' The Liturgies of the Churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Ethiopia, are framed nearly in the same words.

"Tertullian, who lived in the second age, deprecates the blindness of those Christians who did not confess their sins through shame. Here is therefore another essential point of belief known to the primitive Church and combated by your reformers.

"You see therefore that you cannot trust their veracity. I am surprised that you did not perceive the weakness of their cause by their own reasonings.

"They cannot deny that their reformation took place in the sixteenth century. To prove their mission, they claim their succession from the Roman Catholic Church. They

Catholic teaching was, but generally in the 19th C.

admit that Jesus Christ kept his word not to abandon his Church, and still they pretend to belong to the true one, in consequence of their succession from that which, according to their declaration, had deviated from truth since the fourth century. What monstrous reasoning!

"My dear Mrs. Seton, keep well in mind the following argument, and do not trouble your head with controversies.

"All Christians admit that Jesus Christ has established a Church, and that he would be with it to the end of time. St. Paul calls it the column of firmness and of truth.

"There must, therefore be a true Church, and this must be as ancient as Christianity itself.

"All our endeavors must be to find which, among the Christian societies that claim the privilege, is the true Church.

"When we have found it we need no longer study. Let us believe what she teaches, as the true Church cannot err.

"New institutions cannot pretend to the above privilege. If to obtain it they claim succession from another Church, the argument must be this:—

"Either the Church you proceed from was true, or false. If true, you were wrong to change her doctrine; if false, you are false yourselves.

"Right succession and innovation are contradictory things.

"The study of religion cannot be difficult. It must be adapted to the talents of all. Controversies do no good.

"Your clergymen will always endeavor to keep your attention from the above principles, and to throw you into the labyrinth of controversies. If they succeed to throw confusion in your mind they have gained the battle. You will be neither Catholic nor Protestant. They do not care a farthing about it, provided you be not a Catholic.

"As to what they have said respecting councils and their

contradictions, you will observe that as there have been at times two popes, one legal and one illegal, so there have been legal and illegal councils. These must have been wrong, the others right. They could not therefore possibly agree; and the general Church, in admitting those, has refused to acknowledge the others. The treatise I gave you about the infallibility of the Church will show you where infallibility resides.

"I hope to have fairly answered all your questions. I wish I could be near you. I would keep my word to clear your doubts. With the help of God, I would not fear the learned arguments of your divines, without being a divine myself.

"I am, with perfect esteem,

"Your humble servant and affectionate friend,

"PHILIP FILICCHI"

While Mr. Filicchi was thus manifesting his friendly and pious zeal in behalf of Mrs. Seton, she was an object of equal solicitude on the part of his brother in America. We have seen that while in New York he visited her frequently, and when his affairs called him to Boston, he opened a correspondence with her, the main object of which was the promotion of her spiritual welfare. His letters breathed a spirit of the warmest and most exalted friendship, which, although viewing her religious enlightenment as the highest consideration, did not overlook, as we have seen, her temporal happiness. He counselled her in her doubts and consoled her in her trials. Writing from Boston, November 7, 1804, he says:—"Fight, my worthy friend; pray without ceasing. The merciful Redeemer of us all will at last come to your relief, wipe away your tears, exalt your humility, reward your fortitude." He might well address her in this language under the weight of suffer

ing which then oppressed her soul. The mists that still clouded her mind on the subject of religion would alone have sufficed to throw a sensitive and devout spirit like hers into a state of cruel anguish. But, in addition to this, she was met with coldness and indifference by some of her relations and former friends, who could not brook the idea of her hesitating in the preference of Protestantism to Catholicity. For a lady of Mrs. Seton's social standing, and one who had enjoyed every comfort of life before the loss of her husband, this persecution would have been a very serious obstacle to her conversion, had she not possessed a singular firmness, and been actuated by the purest and most elevated intentions. But her object was to place herself and her children in the true way of salvation, and convinced, as our Lord declares in the gospel, that "it will profit a man nothing to gain the whole world if he lose his own soul," she was willing to sacrifice the advantages of this earth for that peace and eternal happiness which the world cannot give. By frequent recourse to prayer and spiritual reading she supported herself under these trials, hoping that the Almighty would at length regard the sincerity of her heart, and dispel the clouds that still hovered over her mind. Writing to a friend at this time, she thus describes her peculiar situation and the cause that produced it:—

"On arriving home (from Italy) I was assailed on the subject of religion by the clergy, who talked of antichrist, idolatry, and urged objections in torrents, which, though not capable of changing the opinions I had adopted, have terrified me enough to keep me in a state of hesitation; and I am thus in the hands of God, praying night and day for his divine light, which can alone direct me aright. I instruct my children in the Catholic religion, without taking any decided step; my heart is in that faith, and it is my

greatest comfort to station myself in imagination in a Catholic church."

They who are acquainted with the various, sometimes mysterious, difficulties that haunt the mind in its progress from error to truth, will readily comprehend that the Catholic faith preponderated in the heart of Mrs. Seton, while she was held back by a certain obscurity still lingering upon the subject, and which we may believe to have been permitted by the Almighty, either as a punishment of the rash exposure of faith, or as a means of testing the fidelity and increasing the merits of his servant. She had no need of further discussion or investigation in regard to the true Church. From the very first opposition that she had met with on the part of her friends in America, she entered profoundly into the examination of the question; and thus was read after author; the texts referred to her consideration were weighed on her knees and with constant tears; and when she was told by her relations that her strong belief in Catholic doctrine was a temptation, she doubled against the enmity of her soul the most effectual weapons in the spiritual conflict, humility, prayer, and fasting; she therefore had employed all the ordinary means for informing herself correctly upon the subject of religious truth; and if she still was prevented, by a certain feeling of diffidence or dread, from being fully influenced by the powerful motives which she possessed for embracing the Catholic communion, it was a trial which God permitted for his greater glory and the more decided benefit of her soul. Her only resource was to pray, to knock at the door of divine mercy, until it should please the Almighty to shed upon her the rays of his heavenly light.

The letters of Mrs. Seton which we have placed before the reader present a lively picture of her distressing situation; but it may be interesting to enter more fully into her

thoughts, and to consider the reasoning by which she rebutted the arguments of her Protestant friends. It will serve to show the powerful hold of Catholic principles on her mind and heart, and the steady action of divine grace in drawing her to the true faith. During the painful struggle of her soul from the month of July, 1804, to the end of the year, she wrote several letters to her friend, Mrs. Amabilia Filicchi, of Leghorn, in which she expresses her sentiments with equal simplicity and force.

"July.

"I had," she says, "a most affectionate note from Mr. Hobart to-day, asking me how I could ever think of leaving the Church in which I was baptized. But, though whatever he says to me has the weight of my partiality for him, as well as the respect it seems to me I could scarcely have for any one else, yet that question made me smile; for it is like saying that wherever a child is born, and wherever its parents place it, there it will find the truth—and he does not hear the droll invitations made me every day, since I am in my little new home, and old friends come to see me; for it has already happened that one of the most excellent women I ever know, who is of the Church of Scotland, finding me unsettled about the great object of a true faith, said to me, 'Oh do, dear soul! come and hear our J. Mason, and I am sure you will join us.' A little after, came one whom I loved for the purest and most innocent manners, of the Society of Quakers, (to which I have been always attached;) she coaxed me too with artless persuasion:—'Betsy, I tell thee, thee had better come with us.' And my faithful old friend of the Anabaptist meeting, Mrs. T——, says, with tears in her eyes, 'Oh, could you be regenerated, could you know our experiences and enjoy with us our heavenly banquet!' And my good old Mary, the Methodist, groans and contemplates, as she calls it, over my soul, so

misled because I have yet no convictions. But, oh my Father and my God! all that will not do for me. Your word is truth and without contradiction, wherever it is. (One faith, one hope, one baptism I look for, wherever it is; and I often think my sins, my miseries, hide the light; yet I will cling and hold to my God to the last gasp, begging for that light, and never change until I find it."

"August.

"There is a sad weariness now over life I never before was tried with. My lovely children round their writing-table, or round our evening fire, make me forget a little this unworthy dejection, which arises, I believe, from continual application of mind to these multiplied books brought for my instruction; above all, Newton's Prophecies. Your poor friend, though, is not so easily troubled as to the facts it dwells on, because it may or may not be; but, living all my days in the thought that all and everybody would be saved who meant well, it grieves my very soul to see that Protestants, as well as your (as I thought) hard and severe principles, see the thing so differently—since this book, so valued by them, sends all followers of the Pope to the bottomless pit, &c.; and it appears by the account made of them from the apostles' time, that a greater part of the world must be already there at any rate. Oh my! the worshipper of images and the man of sin are different enough from the beloved souls I knew in Leghorn, to ease my mind on that point, since I so well knew what you worshipped, my Amabilia; but yet, so painful and sorrowful an impression is left on my heart, it is all clouded and troubled. So I say the penitential psalms, if not with the spirit of the royal prophet, at least with his tears, which truly mix with the food and water the couch of your poor friend, yet with such confidence in God, that it seems to me he never was so truly my Father and my all at any moment of my life.

Anna coaxes me, when we are at our evening prayers, to say, *Hail, Mary!* and all say, 'Oh do, ma, teach it to us!' Even little Rebecca tries to lisp it, though she can scarcely speak; and I ask my Saviour, why should we not say it? If any one is in heaven, his mother must be there. Are the angels, then, who are so often represented as being so interested for us on earth, more compassionate, more exalted, than she is? Oh, no, no! Mary, our Mother, that cannot be. So I beg her, with the confidence and tenderness of her child, to pity us and guide us to the true faith, if we are not in it; and, if we are, to obtain peace for my poor soul, that I may be a good mother to my poor darlings; for I know if God should leave me to myself after all my sins, he would be justified; and since I read these books, my head is quite bewildered about the few that are saved; so I kiss her picture you gave me, and beg her to be a mother to me."

"September.

"Your Antonio would not have been well pleased to see me in St. Paul's (Protestant Episcopal) Church to-day; but peace and persuasion about proprieties, &c. over-prevalled: yet I got in a side pew, which turned my face toward the Catholic Church, in the next street, and found myself twenty times speaking to the Blessed Sacrament *there*, instead of looking at the naked altar where I was, or minding the routine of prayers. Tears plenty, and sighs as silent and deep as when I first entered your blessed Church of the Annunciation in Florence—all turning to the one only desire, to see the way most pleasing to my God, whichever that way is. Mr. Hobart says, 'How can you believe that there are as many Gods as there are millions of altars and tens of millions of blessed hosts all over the world?' Again I can but smile at his earnest words; for the whole of my cogitations about it are reduced to one thought:—*It is*

God who does it—the same God who fed so many thousands with the little barley-loaves and little fishes, multiplying them, of course, in the hands which distributed them.' The thought stops not a moment to me; I look straight at my God, and see that nothing is so very hard to believe in it, since it is *HE* who does it. Years ago, I read in some old book, 'When you say a thing is a mystery and you do not understand it, you say nothing against the mystery itself, but only acknowledge your limited knowledge and comprehension, which does not understand a thousand things you must yet own to be true.' And so often it comes in my head, if the religion which gives to the world (at least to so great a part of it) the heavenly consolations attached to the belief of the presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament, to be the food of the poor wanderers in the desert of this world, as well as the manna was the support of the Israelites through the wilderness to their Canaan; if this religion, says your poor friend, is the work or contrivance of men and priests, as they say, then God seems not as earnest for our happiness as these contrivers, nor to love us, though the children of redemption and bought with the precious blood of his dear Son, as much as he did the children of the old Law; since he leaves our churches with nothing but naked walls, and our altars undorned with either the ark which his presence filled, or any of the precious pledges of his care for us, which he gave to those of old. They tell me I must worship him now in spirit and in truth; but my poor spirit very often goes to sleep, or roves about like an idler, for want of something to fix its attention; and for the truth, dearest Amabilia, I think I feel more true union of heart and soul with him over a picture of the crucifixion I found years ago in my father's portfolio, than in the——; but what I was going to say would be folly, for truth does not depend on the people

around us, or the place we are in. I can only say, I do long and desire to worship our God in truth; and if I had never met you Catholics, and yet should have read the books Mr. Hobart has brought me, they would have in themselves brought a thousand uncertainties and doubts to my mind; and these soften my heart so much before God, in the certainty how much he must pity me, knowing, as he does, the whole and sole bent of my soul is to please him only, and get close to him in this life and the next, that in the midnight hour, believe me, I often look up at the walls through the tears and distress that overpower me, expecting rather to see his finger writing on the wall for my relief, than that he will forsake or abandon so poor a creature."

"November.

"I do not get on, Amabilia; cannot cast the balance for the peace of this poor soul; but it suffers plenty, and the body too. I say daily, with great confidence of being one day heard, the 110th Psalm, never weary of repeating it, and reading à Kempis, who, by the way, was a Catholic writer, and, as our Protestant preface says, 'wonderfully versed in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures;' and I read much, too, of St Francis de Sales, so earnest for bringing all to the bosom of the Catholic Church; and I say to myself, Will I ever know better how to please God than they did? and down I kneel to pour my tears to them, and beg them to obtain faith for me. Then I see faith is a gift of God, to be diligently sought and earnestly desired, and groan to him for it in silence, since our Saviour says I cannot come to him unless the Father draw me. So it is; by-and-by, I trust, this storm will cease—how painful and often agonizing He only knows who can and will still it in his own good time. Mrs. S—, my long-tried friend, observed to me this morning that I had penance enough

without seeking it among Catholics. True; but we bear all the pain without the merit. Yet I do try sincerely to turn all mine for account of my soul. I was telling her I hoped the more I suffered in this life the more I hoped to be spared in the next, as I believed God would accept my pains in atonement for my sins. She said, 'that was indeed very comfortable doctrine;' she wished she could believe it. Indeed, it is all my comfort, dearest Amabilia, worn out now to a skeleton, almost death may now overtake me in the struggle. But God himself must finish it.

"Would you believe, Amabilia—in a desperation of heart I went last Sunday to St. George's (Protestant Episcopal) Church. The wants and necessities of my soul were so pressing that I looked straight up to God, and I told him, Since I cannot see the way to please you whom alone I wish to please, every thing is indifferent to me; and until you do show me the way you mean me to walk in, I will trudge on in the path you suffered me to be born in, and go even to the very sacrament where I once used to find you. So away I went, my old Mary happy to take care of the children for me once more until I came back; but if I left the house a Protestant I returned to it a Catholic, I think, since I determined to go no more to the Protestants, being much more troubled than ever I thought I could be while I remembered God is my God. But so it was, that the bowing of my heart before the bishop to receive his absolution, which is given publicly and universally to all in the church—I had not the least faith in his prayers, and looked for an apostolic loosing from my sins, which, by the books Mr. Hobart had given me to read, I find they do not claim or admit,—then, trembling to communion, half dead with the inward struggle; when they said, 'the body and blood of Christ,' oh, Amabilia, no words for my trial! And I remember, in my old prayer-book of former edition, when I

was a child, it was not, as now, said to be spiritually taken and received; however, to get thoughts away, I took the *Daily Exercise* of good Abbé Plunkett, to read the prayers after communion; but finding every word addressed to our dear Saviour as really present, I became half crazy, and for the first time could not bear the sweet caresses of the darlings or bless their little dinner. Oh, my God, that day! but it finished calmly at last, abandoning all to God, and a renewed confidence in the Blessed Virgin, whose mild and peaceful look reproached my bold excesses, and reminded me to fix my heart above with better hopes."

Such was the resolution which, aided by the grace of God, was to be a source of light and peace to the troubled soul of Mrs. Seton—to abandon all to him and rely upon the declarations of his holy word. Her mind had been so harassed with doubt, so cruelly agitated by conflicting thoughts and ineffectual attempts to discover the true faith, that she had formed the desperate purpose of embracing no particular form of Christianity until the hour of death; but God was watching over her, to withdraw her feet from the brink of the precipice. On the feast of the Epiphany, the office of which commemorates the homage paid by the Wise Men to the infant Saviour of mankind, she took up a sermon of Bourdaloue on that subject, which, alluding to the inquiry made by those Eastern sages among the priests and doctors of the law, "Where is he who is born King of the Jews?" observes, that when we no longer discern the star of faith, we must seek it where alone it is to be found, among the depositaries of the divine word, the pastors of the Church. This suggestion, with the blessing of God, produced the most salutary impression on her mind. She at once resolved to consult again those books on the Catholic faith which had originally won her to it, and she endeavored also to obtain an interview with the Rev. Mr. O'Brien,

pastor of St. Peter's Church. Failing, however, in this, and ardently desirous of receiving direction from the ministers of God, she addressed a letter to the Rev. John Cheverus, then assistant pastor of the Catholic Church in Boston.* In vain did those around her attempt to influence her by worldly considerations. Writing to a friend at this time, she says that Catholics in New York were represented as "the offscourings of the people," and the congregation said to be "a public nuisance;" "but," she adds, "that troubles not me. The congregation of a city may be very shabby, yet very pleasing to God; or very bad people among them, yet cannot hurt the *faith*, as I take it. And should the priest himself deserve no more respect than is here allowed him, his ministry of the sacraments would be the same to me, if I ever shall receive them. I seek but God and his Church, and expect to find my peace in them, not in the people."

While her mind was in these happy dispositions, she received from Bishop Carroll a further evidence of the lively interest which he took in her welfare. In a letter to Mr. Filicchi he says:—"Though I have heard no more than is contained in your last concerning the most estimable lady for whose situation and happiness you are so much interested, yet I have the fullest confidence that, after being put to the severe and most distressing trial of interior darkness, doubts, and terrors of making a wrong step, our merciful Father in heaven will soon send her relief, and diffuse light and consolation in her heart. Among the religious books in her possession, I doubt not of her having that most ex-

* Afterward first Bishop of that city, and, still later, Bishop of Montauban, in France, and Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux. See his *Life*, by the Rev. J. Huen Dubourg, translated from the French by Robert M. Walsh; 12mo., Philadelphia, 1841. The letter which Mrs. Seton wrote to Mr. Cheverus at this interesting juncture, and his answer, I have not been able to discover, notwithstanding the most diligent search.

cellent one, generally ascribed to Thomas à Kempis, 'Of the Following of Christ.' Recommend to her, when her soul is weighed down with trouble and anxiety, to read the ninth chapter of the second book, entitled 'Of the want or absence of every comfort.' As far as it is in my power to judge of her state of mind, from the account of it contained in your letters, I do not think it advisable for her at present to perplex herself with reading any more controversy. She has seen enough on that subject to assure herself of the true principles for settling her faith. Her great business now should be to beseech our Divine Redeemer to revive in her heart the grace of her baptism, and to fortify her soul in the resolution of following unreservedly the voice of God speaking to her heart, however difficult and painful the sacrifices may be which it requires. Having confirmed herself in this resolution, it must be to her a matter of the first importance to inspect the state of her conscience, and judge herself impartially and with the utmost sincerity, divesting herself as much as she can, with the aid of divine grace, not only of every sinful attachment, but of every affection that has not God for its source, its motive, and its object. She ought to consider whether the tears she sheds and the prayers she offers to heaven are purely for God's sake, and arise solely from compunction for sin, and are unmixed with any alloy of worldly respects or inordinate solicitude for the attainment of some worldly purpose. Indeed, when I read the words you copied from her letters, and her letters themselves, I remain convinced of the sincerity of her endeavors to make herself conformable in all things to the divine will; but afterward a fear arises in my mind that God discovers in her some lurking imperfection, and defers the final grace of her conversion till her soul be entirely purified of its irregular attachments. The ordinary course of Providence, with respect to those who are to be tried by

interior darkness and tribulation, is to subject them to it after their conversion is completed; and it often happens that those trials become highly useful, and dispose those who are subject to them to disclose with the utmost sincerity the entire state of their consciences, all their weaknesses, and even those imperfections of which formerly they made no account. Perhaps, in the case of your most esteemed and respected friend, it pleases God to suffer her to experience now, before her open union with his Church, those agitations of conscience which will induce her to perform, with the greatest care and attention, all previous duties necessary for her adoption into it."

Unfortunately, we are not in possession of the correspondence which passed between Mrs. Seton and the Rev. Mr. Cheverus at this period; but we know from other sources of information that the wise counsels of that distinguished clergyman, and the excellent advices of Bishop Carroll, contributed in an eminent degree, under God, to dispel the doubts and apprehensions of her soul and inspire her with a fixed determination to seek admission into the Catholic Church. Her final resolution on this important question, and the grounds on which it rested, are thus beautifully expressed in her own words:—

"Now they tell me, take care, I am a mother, and my children I must answer for in judgment, whatever faith I lead them to. That being so, and I so unconscious, for I little thought, till told by Mr. Hobart, that their faith could be so full of consequence to them or me, I will go peaceably and firmly to the Catholic Church; for, if faith is so important to our salvation, I will seek it where true faith first began—seek it among those who received it from God himself. The controversies on it I am quite incapable of deciding; and, as the strictest Protestant allows salvation to a good Catholic, to the Catholics I will go, and try to be a good

one. May God accept my intention and pity me! As to supposing the word of our Lord has failed, and that he has suffered his first foundation to be built on by antichrist, I cannot stop on that without stopping on every other word of our Lord, and being tempted to be no Christian at all; for, if the first Church became antichrist, and the second holds her rights from it, then I should be afraid both might be antichrist, and I make my way to the bottomless pit by following either. Come, then, my little ones, we will go to judgment together, and present our Lord his own words; and if he says, 'You fools, I did not mean that,' we will say, 'Since you said you would be *always*, even to the end of ages, with this Church you built with your blood, if you ever left it, it is your word which misled us; therefore please to pardon your poor fools, for your own word's sake.'

Under those convictions, Mrs. Seton applied without delay to be admitted into the "one fold under one shepherd." For this purpose, on the 14th of March, Ash-Wednesday, she went to St. Peter's Church, in a spirit of entire consecration of herself to God. "How the heart," she says, "died away as it were in silence before the little tabernacle and the great crucifixion over it! Ah, my God, here let me rest, and down the head on the bosom and the knees on the bench. If I could have thought of any thing but God, there was enough, I suppose, to have astonished a stranger by the hurrying over of the congregation; but as I came only to visit his Majesty, I knew not what it meant till afterward,—that it was a day they received ashes, the beginning of Lent; and the droll but most venerable Irish priest, who seems just come there, talked of death so familiarly that he delighted and revived me." After the service, Mrs. Seton made a formal abjuration of Protestantism, and profession of the Catholic faith at the hands of Rev. Matthew O'Brien, and in presence of Mr. Anthony

Filicchi, her devoted friend.* With the simplicity and humble submission of a true child of the Church, she acknowledged her belief in all its teachings, relying with confidence upon its authority as the representative of Christ on earth; and her mind thus composed, she returned home, she says, "light at heart and cool of head, the first time these many long months, but not without begging our Lord to wrap my heart deep in that open side, so well described in the beautiful crucifixion, or lock it up in his little tabernacle where I shall now rest forever. Oh the endearments of this day with the children, and the play of the heart with God while keeping up their little farces with them!" Her whole attention was now devoted to the requisite preparation for the reception of the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist, which were to be the seal of her peace and union with God; and we cannot better convey than in her own expressive language an idea of the fervent dispositions of her soul in approaching these fountains of divine grace:—

"So delighted now to prepare for this good confession, which, bad as I am, I would be ready to make on the house-top, to insure the good *absolution* I hope for after it,—and then to set out a new life—a new existence itself—no great difficulty for me to be ready for it, for truly my life has been well called over in bitterness of soul these months of sorrow passed.

"It is done—easy enough. The kindest, most respectable confessor is this Mr. O'Brien,—with the compassion and yet firmness in this work of mercy which I would have ex-

* In memory of this joyful occasion, Mrs. Seton gave to Mr. Filicchi, who had been so instrumental in her conversion, a copy of the "Following of Christ," with this inscription:—"Antonio Filicchi, from his dear sister and friend, Eliza A. Seton, to commemorate the happy day he presented her to the Church of God, the 14th March, 1805."

pested from my Lord himself. Our Lord himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part of this venerable sacrament; for oh! how awful those words of unloosing after a thirty years' bondage. I felt as if my chains fell, as those of St. Peter, at the touch of the divine messenger.

"My God! what new scenes for my soul! Annunciation-day I shall be made one with him who said, 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you can have no part with me.' I count the days and hours—yet a few more of hope and expectation, and then—. How bright the sun, these morning walks of preparation! Deep snow, or smooth ice, all to me the same—I see nothing but the little bright cross on St. Peter's steeple.

"*March 25.*—At last God is mine, and I am his. Now let all go its round. I have received him. The awful impressions of the evening before—fears of not having done all to prepare, and yet even the transports of confidence and hope in his goodness. My God! to the last breath of life will I not remember this night of watching for morning dawn—the fearful, beating heart, so pressing to be gone—the long walk to town, but every step counted nearer that street—then nearer that tabernacle—then nearer the moment he would enter the poor, poor little dwelling so all his own. And when he did, the first thought I remember was, 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;' for it seemed to me my King had come to take his throne, and, instead of the humble, tender welcome I had expected to give him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness that the deliverer was come, and my defence, and shield, and strength, and salvation, made mine for this world and the next. Now, then, all the excesses of my heart found their play, and it danced with more fervor—no, must not say that—but perhaps almost with as much of the Royal Prophet before his ark; for I was far richer than he, and more honored than he ever

could be. Now the point is for the fruits. So far, truly I feel all the powers of my soul held fast by him who came with so much majesty to take possession of his little poor kingdom."

Such were the fervent sentiments that accompanied Mrs. Seton to a participation of the bread of life. The memory of that day never passed from her mind; she commemorated it annually, sanctifying it by acts of gratitude to God, and approaching with renewed piety that sacrament of love in which she found a pledge of her eternal union with God.

BOOK IV.

Mrs. Seton's appreciation of Catholicity—Correspondence with Rev. Mr. Cheverus—Other clergymen—Persecution from her family—Her temporal affairs—Mr. Filicchi's substantial friendship—Her sons placed at college—Daily duties—Piety and faith—Instructions of Rev. Mr. Tisseyant—Mrs. Seton receives the sacrament of confirmation—Messrs. Filicchi and Tisseyant embark for Europe—Relations between Mr. Filicchi and Mrs. Seton—Her deportment toward Protestants—Intercourse between her and Miss Cecilia Seton—Conversion of the latter—Her heroic faith—Increased opposition to Mrs. Seton—Her new friends—Example of her sister-in-law and herself—Instruction of her children—She meets Rev. William Dubourg—New plans—Confers with Bishop Carroll—Views of Messrs. Malignon and Cheverus—Remarkable prediction of the former—Notice of Mr. Dubourg—Difficulties of Mrs. Seton's position in New York—She consults Bishop Carroll—His advice—Another interview with Mr. Dubourg—She resolves to commence an institution in Baltimore—Plan of Mr. Dubourg.

AFTER the long and difficult struggle which she made to become a member of the true Church, Mrs. Seton could not but feel it an extraordinary degroce the worth of that hidden treasure of faith which had been revealed to her. So

highly did she prize it, and so grateful a sense did she entertain of the precious gift, that she poured forth the most fervent thanksgiving to the Father of lights, for the mercies he had vouchsafed to her, and hastened, like the woman in the gospel who had found the goat that was lost, to express her joy and happiness, by communicating the glad tidings to all her friends. The Rev. Mr. Cheverus received the following letter from her soon after her conversion:—

“REV. AND DEAR SIR:—

“My joyful heart offers you the tribute of its lively gratitude for your kind and charitable interest in its sorrows when it was oppressed with doubts and fears, and hastens, after the completion of its happiness, to inform you that, through the boundless mercy of God, and aided by your satisfactory counsels, my soul has offered all its hesitations and reluctancies a sacrifice, with the blessed sacrifice on the altar, on the 14th of March, and the next day was admitted to the true Church of Jesus Christ, with a mind grateful and satisfied, as that of a poor shipwrecked mariner on being restored to his true home.* I should immediately have made a communication so pleasing to you, but have been necessarily very much engaged in collecting all the powers of my soul for receiving the pledge of eternal happiness with which it has been blessed on the happy day of the Annunciation, when it seemed indeed to be admitted to a new life and that peace which passes all understanding. With David, I now say, ‘Thou hast saved my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling,’ and certainly desire most earnestly to ‘walk before him in the land of the living,’ esteeming my privilege so great, and what he has done for me so beyond my most lively hopes, that I

* By admission to the true Church, Mrs. Seton probably means that she was baptized conditionally and approached the sacrament of penance.

can scarcely realize my own blessedness. You, dear sir, could never experience, but may picture to yourself a poor burdened creature, weighed down with sins and sorrows, receiving an immediate transition to life, liberty, and rest. Oh, pray for me, that I may be faithful and persevering to the end; and I would beg of you advice and counsel how to preserve my inestimable blessings. True, there are many good books, but directions personally addressed from a revered source must forcibly impress. For instance, many years I have preferred those chapters which you appoint in St. John; but, from your direction, make it a rule to read them constantly. The book you mentioned, ‘The Following of Christ,’ has been my consolation through the severest struggles of my life, and indeed one of my first convictions of the truth arose from reflecting on the account a Protestant writer gives of Kempis, as having been remarkable for his study and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and fervent zeal in the service of God. I remember falling on my knees, and with many tears inquired of God if he who knew his Scriptures so well, and so ardently loved him, could have been mistaken in the true faith. Also, in reading the life of St. Francis de Sales, I felt a perfect willingness to follow him, and could not but pray that my soul might have its portion with his on the great day. The sermons of Bourdaloue have also greatly helped to convince and enlighten me. For many months past, one of them is always included in my daily devotions.”

The spiritual aid here solicited from the Rev. Mr. Cheverus was most cordially extended. The epistolary correspondence which had commenced between him and Mrs. Seton was continued to the close of her life, to the great satisfaction and edification of both. He entertained for her the highest respect and esteem, and expressed to her the hope that their correspondence would be kept up, as he con-

sidered it a happiness to be favored with her letters. Shortly after her admission into the Church, he sent her a prayer-book, "as a small token of his friendship and respect," adding:—"Whenever you think I can be of any use to you, I beg, dear madam, you will apply without any fear of doing it too often; I shall always answer your esteemed letters with punctuality, and in the best manner I am able." Mrs. Seton had the advantage of intercourse with several other distinguished clergymen of that day. Besides the venerable Bishop Carroll, whose valued services in her behalf we have already noticed, she became acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Matignon, pastor of the Catholic Church at Boston, who, like Mr. Cheverus, had been driven from France by the terrors of the revolution, and, like him, had won the respect of the whole population of Boston.¹⁶ A gentleman writing to Mrs. Seton from this place remarked to her, in allusion to these worthy ecclesiastics:—"Their appearance, their deportment, their learning, are acknowledged almost with enthusiasm by most of the Protestants themselves." The Rev. Michael Hurley, an Augustinian friar, then lately arrived from Europe, and afterward pastor of St. Augustine's in Philadelphia, was also a particular friend of Mrs. Seton, and, as we shall see hereafter, took an active part in her spiritual concerns. But Mr. Cheverus recommended to her particular regard, as a director on special occasions, the Rev. Mr. Tisserant, a French ecclesiastic, who was on a visit to America, and resided principally at Elizabethtown, New Jersey; "a most amiable and respectable man," as Mr. Cheverus styled him, and equally conspicuous for his learning and piety. It was a particular blessing of God upon Mrs. Seton that she was surrounded at this time by so many shining members of the priesthood; for the difficulties of her position, in consequence of the change in her religious sentiments and practice, called for the exercise of great fortitude,

which found a powerful support in the sympathy and counsels of her enlightened friends.

The most painful circumstance that she had to contend with was the opposition and indifference of many with whom she had ever been united by the most intimate ties. Not reflecting that her earnest inquiry after the true faith, and the disposition to make every sacrifice for the peace and salvation of her soul, should have entitled her to increased respect and admiration, these false friends suffered themselves to be misled by a bigoted and unchristian spirit. She had followed the dictates of her conscience and become a Catholic; this was enough to excite against her the most unkind feelings, even among those who professed to believe that every one should judge for himself on the subject of religion. Such has always been the extraordinary inconsistency of sectarianism; but at the period of Mrs. Seton's conversion the spirit of hostility to the Catholic Church was more deeply rooted in the public mind than at the present day. The time had just passed away when the true faith was proscribed in New York, and, although the severe penalties which had been enforced against the exercise of the Catholic religion were now abolished, the Protestant exclusiveness of the anterevolutionary period was far from having disappeared, and the Catholic portion of the community being comparatively small, and possessing no social or political influence, it was considered by the aristocracy of the city a sort of degradation to leave the ranks of Protestantism for the communion of the true Church. To a woman of Mrs. Seton's delicate sensibility, the aversion and estrangement of many who had been warmly attached to her must have been in the highest degree painful. Some, indeed, of her former friends remained unaltered in their attachment, but few had the courage to appear so openly.

This state of things could not but operate materially against

her temporal prospects. The decline of her husband's affairs, caused by untoward circumstances which have been referred to, had left her without a sufficient maintenance for her family. If she had remained a Protestant, however, she would have received every assistance, and would have inherited a large fortune; as it was, she was obliged to depend upon her own exertions, except so far as she was aided by the munificent friendship of Mr. Filicchi and a few others who were interested in her welfare. Had circumstances required it, or even had Mrs. Seton acquiesced in the plan, he would have provided a comfortable home for herself and her family in Italy; and he assured her reportedly that even in this country his means would be liberally advanced for the promotion of her happiness, if they who should be her first resource in the order of nature neglected to supply her wants. His agents in New York were constantly directed to honor any demands that she would make upon them, while she herself was urged by him on various occasions, and in the most pressing manner, to accept his friendly offers. He hoped, by carrying her through the troubles of this world, to attain to the happiness of the world to come. "To relieve her wants," he said, "was the pride of his soul, and his best passport for his last journey." But Mrs. Seton's energy of character and spirit of humility did not permit her to rely entirely upon the generosity of others. She wished to exert herself, in accordance with the circumstances of her situation, for the support of her family; and with this view she adopted a plan suggested by one of her friends, to open a boarding-house for a limited number of boys who attended an academy in the northern suburbs of the city. By her attentions to the youths thus confided to her care she was enabled in part to secure a comfortable maintenance.

In addition to his other acts of generosity, Mr. Filicchi

showed a deep and efficient interest for the education of her children. During a visit to Canada, in the summer of 1805, he made the necessary inquiries relative to the collegiate establishment at Montreal, intending to place her two boys in that institution, one of whom was now seven and the other nine years of age. The buildings, however, having been damaged by fire, were not prepared for the reception of students from abroad. This circumstance directed his attention to the colleges at Baltimore and Georgetown, in the United States; and after mature reflection they were entered at the latter establishment in May, 1806.⁽¹⁾

However repugnant to natural pride may have been the present condition of Mrs. Seton, compared with the affluence and independence of former years, she found in it an occasion of joy and thankfulness, because she had the consolation to know that her sacrifices and troubles had proceeded from her resolution to do the will of God. In her religion she possessed a treasure which amply compensated her for the loss of earthly things. Every day increased her gratitude to God for having made her what she was, and her generous fortitude was a proof of the high value which she set upon the inestimable blessing. With these sentiments she went through her daily round of duty, commencing it with prayer and attendance at the holy sacrifice of mass, and frequently approaching the holy communion, the great source of her spiritual energy and comfort. She would then occupy herself with her domestic concerns, and, after the little fatigues and labors of the day, assemble her children and entertain them at the piano, while they united their innocent voices with hers in some pious anthem. Such was the course which she pursued, with an humble submission to the will of God in the midst of her trials, and free from all pride that would have murmured against the dispensations of Heaven. The following incident will show the Christian temperament of

her soul, in regard to her temporal situation. An elderly gentleman, a relative, knowing that for the support of her family she was dependent on her exertions, would frequently take a basket, go himself to the market, purchase the joint of meat which he knew she liked, (for he had in more prosperous days been a guest at her table,) add to it some other little article, and carry it himself to her humble dwelling, fearful of intrusting so delicate a commission to a servant. In speaking of this circumstance to a friend, in after years, she manifested a lively sense of the kindness that had been shown to her.

With this patient submission to the orderings of the divine will, Mrs. Seton united an extraordinary fervor in the performance of her religious duties, and a lively spirit of faith in all her actions. She looked upon the privilege of receiving the holy communion as the greatest happiness on earth, and as a remedy for every evil. The following words in a letter to one of her relations, whom she urges to sigh after the possession of the true faith, show the sentiments that animated her in receiving the bread of life:—"Beg him, supplicate him, on Sunday, that he will permit you to receive with true faith the sweet substance instead of the shadow. Oh heavenly bliss! delight past all expression! how consoling, how sweet, the presence of Jesus to the longing, harassed soul! It is instant peace, and balm to every wound." So intensely did she feel the happiness of possessing our Lord really present on the altar, that she wondered much more at the insensibility of the Christian who stands at a distance from this heavenly treasure or is not wholly spiritualized by its divine communications, than at the mystery itself which the eucharistic institution presents to our belief. "There is a mystery," she says, "the greatest of all mysteries, not that my adored Lord is in the blessed sacrament of the altar,—his word has said it; and what so

simple as to take that word which is truth itself?—but that souls of his own creation, whom he gave his life to save, who are endowed with his choicest gifts in all things else, should remain blind, insensible, and deprived of that light without which every other blessing is unavailing, and that the ungrateful, stupid, faithless being to whom he has given the free, the bounteous, heavenly gift shall approach his true and holy sanctuary, taste the sweetness of his presence, feed on the bread of angels, the Lord of Glory united to the very essence of its being and become a part of itself, yet still remain grovelling in the earth,—in, my poor, poor soul, is what we too well experience, while lost in wonder of his forbearing mercy, and still more wondering at our own misery in the very centre of blessedness. Jesus then is there: we can go, receive him; he is our own. Were we to pause and think of this through eternity, yet we can only realize it by his conviction. That he is there—oh heavenly theme!—is as entirely true as that bread naturally taken removes my hunger, so this bread of angels removes my pain, my cares; warms, cheers, soothes, contents, and renews my whole being. Merciful God, and I do possess you! kindest, tenderest, dearest friend, every affection of my nature absorbed in you, still is active, nay, perfected in its operations through your refining love. Hush, my soul, we cannot speak it. Tongues of angels could not express our treasure of peace and contentment in him. Let us always whisper his name of love as an antidote to all the discord that surrounds us. We cannot say the rest; the harmony of heaven begins to us, while, silent from all the world, we again and again repeat, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And how many say the adored name, looking beyond him, while looking for him—deny him on his altar! Who, then, is the author of the religion I adore? Is man, then, wiser in his inventions than eternal Wisdom? Did he contrive a method to relieve the wretched, to support the feeble,

to recall the sinner and secure the inconstant? Which of us, having once tasted how sweet the Lord is on his holy altar and in his true sanctuary, who finding at that altar his nourishment of soul and strength to labor, his propitiation, thanksgiving, hope, and refuge, can think but with sorrow and anguish of heart of the naked, unsubstantial, comfortless worship they partake of who know not the treasure of our faith? Theirs founded on words of which they take the shadow, while we enjoy the adored substance in the centre of our souls! Theirs void, cheerless, in comparison of the bliss of our daily offering, where Jesus pleads for us! Oh, my soul, when our corrupted nature overpowers, when we are sick of ourselves, weakened on all sides, discouraged with repeated relapses, wearied with sin and sorrow, we gently, sweetly lay the whole account at his feet; reconciled and encouraged by his appointed representative, yet trembling, and conscious of our imperfect dispositions, we draw near the sacred fountain. Scarcely the expanded heart receives its longing desire, when, wrapt in his love, covered with his righteousness, we are no longer the same—adoration, thanksgiving, love, joy, peace, contentment. Unutterable mercy! take this from me; though now the happiest of poor and banished sinners, the most wretched, desolate. What would be my refuge? Jesus is everywhere, in the very air I breathe; yes, everywhere, but in his sacrament of the altar as present actually and really as my soul within my body; in his sacrifice daily offered as really as once offered on the cross. Merciful Saviour! can there be any comparison to this blessedness? Adored Lord, increase my faith, perfect it, crown it, thy own, thy choicest, dearest gift. Having drawn me from the pit, and borne me to thy fold, keep me in thy sweet pastures and lead me to eternal life."

The following language expresses the comfort which she experienced in approaching the tribunal of penance, which

had the effect of invigorating her soul against the assaults of her spiritual enemies:—

"At the tribunal of reconciliation I received strength Father Sibourd assured the feeble soul, and warned it of the treacherous bond who would tempt the little child from the arms of its mother. Dear, dear adored Redeemer, as the suffering, disobedient, and ungrateful child, but wretched and lost without your reviving and pitying tenderness and pardon, I have lain and still remain at your sacred feet. The abundance of tears there shed will, mixed with your precious blood, feed and nourish the soul that faints and pants for deliverance from its chains, and hopes in your mercy alone."

In order to impress more vividly and enduringly upon her mind the good thoughts and resolutions which the grace of God had inspired, Mrs. Seton was in the habit of committing them to paper,—a practice which is often witnessed among pious persons, and found to be a great help in the service of God. Her religious inclinations had led her to this custom from early life, and, now that she enjoyed blessings so far surpassing those of former days, she did not abandon one of the most effectual means of treasuring them up in her memory and affections. From the scraps which she has left us, and of which we have already furnished a few specimens, it is plain that the sanctification of her soul was with her the "one thing necessary," the object of her deep and constant solicitude. To promote this she entered profoundly into the scrutiny of her sentiments and actions, prayed often, and meditated upon the truths of faith. She thus brings before her view the weakness and falterings of human nature in the hour of difficulty, and the necessity of being always sustained by divine grace.

"Sept. 29, *Fest of St. Michael, Archangel.*—The sigh of the wretched hails you, glorious friend! My soul claims

your patronage by its fervent affection and confidence in your protection against its enemy. How he triumphs in that poor soul! Poor, poor soul! in the hour of peace and serenity how confidently you asserted your fidelity, how sincerely embraced pain and suffering in anticipation, and now that only one finger of his hand, whose whole weight you deserved, is laid on you, recollection is lost, nature struggles, you sink, sorrow overpowers, and pain takes you captive. Oh, my soul, who shall deliver? My Jesus, arise, and let thy enemies be scattered. Shelter my sinking spirit under his banner who continually exclaims, 'Who is like God?'"

On the feast of St. Theresa, October 15, considering her imperfection by the light shed from the example of that great saint, she pours forth her soul to God with equal earnestness and humility, and animates herself to further and more strenuous efforts in his service. "Holy Mother! you called yourself a sinner, the worst of sinners. What then am I? The sins of your whole life would be balanced by the sum of any one of my days. My Almighty God! what then am I? And if in the short and feeble sight of mortality so deeply dyed, what then in the searching light of thy truth and justice? My Saviour, my Jesus, hide me, shelter me. Shelter the shuddering, trembling soul that lays itself in thy hand. Yes, again I begin—nothing is done. Oh, give me that clean heart—give me thy Spirit. Oh God, how short may be my time! Help me, draw me on. How much of my day is past I know not. Save me; let not the night overtake. Blessed saints of God, pray for the wandering, weary soul who has stayed so far behind. You have reached the summit, pray for me."

Nothing can exceed the vivid portraiture which Mrs. Seton draws of her own heart, and of the strong emotions

rising within her in the moment of devout recollection and prayer. Her morning visit to the church in opposition to the sluggishness of nature, the consolations she enjoyed in the presence of God, the unreserved offering of herself to him on the altar of charity, her only desire to love him, and this at the risk of every thing on earth,—all is depicted to us with a power of language and a force of description that shows how deeply she was affected by these sentiments of faith.

"Feast of St. Thomas of Villanova, September 18.—Remember this day—the head cleaving to the pillow, the slothful heart asleep—how unwilling you were roused to go to your Lord, who has so often overflowed the cup of blessing at the very moment of insensibility and ingratitude. So this day, when he was approached more as a slave goes to regular duty than the perishing wretch to its deliverer, how sweet, how merciful was the reception he gave! how bountiful, how abundant thy portion! What a reproof to the soul that loves thee, adored Master! and how mercifully, too, it was awakened to receive it! What was its reply? It can only be understood by the unutterable love and intelligence of a spirit to its Creator, Redeemer, God. But it must remember the ardor with which the offering was renewed of all, all, for the attainment of thy dear love. Imagining the corrupted heart in thy hand, it begged thee with all its strength to cut, pare, and remove from it (whatever anguish it must undergo) whatever prevented the entrance of thy love. Again it repeats the supplication, and begs it as thy greatest mercy, cut to the centre, tear up every root, let it bleed, let it suffer any thing, every thing, only fit it for thyself, place only thy love there, and let humility keep sentinel, and what shall I fear? What is pain, sorrow, poverty, reproach? Blessed Lord! they all were once thy inmates, thy chosen com-

passions, and can I reject them as enemies, and fly from the friends you send to bring me to your kingdom? Lord, I am dust; in sweetest, pitying mercy scourge me, compel my coward, feeble spirit; fill it with that fire which consumed the blessed saint this day commemorated, when he cried out declaring that all torments and fatigues should joyfully be borne to obtain it. Unite my unworthy soul to his earnest entreaty:—"O, omnipotent Jesus! give me what thyself commandest; for though to love thee be of all things most sweet, yet it is above the reach and strength of nature. But I am inexcusable if I do not love thee, for thou grantest thy love to all who desire or ask it. I cannot see without light, yet if I shut my eyes to the noonday light the fault is not in the sun, but in me."

This love of God which she so ardently invoked into her soul was the principle of all her actions; for it led her to unite them continually with those of Jesus Christ, and even to preserve as much as possible the thought of God in the midst of her temporal affairs. On one occasion in particular, when she was very much harassed by the frequent calls upon her attention, her spirit seemed to be unfettered by outward cares, and flew almost every moment to the engrossing object of her affections. Speaking of this circumstance, she observed, "Who can bind the soul which God sets free? It sprang to him fifty times an hour. Scarcely a moment without being turned to him, while the voice and eyes were answering down below, sweet! sweet!" Spiritual writers teach us that there are two principal methods of walking in the presence of God: either by occasional direction of one's thoughts and aspirations to the Almighty, or by entering into the spirit of our great Model, and striving to copy in our various actions the example which he has displayed. Mrs. Seton practised this excellent means of sanctification in both ways, and,

while she thus proved the ardor and sincerity of her love for God, she enjoyed that blessed peace which it always imparts to the soul. Even in the midst of scenes that were calculated to depress the mind and fill the heart with sorrow, she found a source of interior joy in endeavoring to imitate the spirit of self-denial which our divine Saviour exhibited in his sufferings. Alluding to the sickness which afflicted some of her family, she says:—"Our little hospital is cheerful this morning after a sad night. Gladly accompanied our Adored in spirit through the streets of Jerusalem all night. When the heart is all his, how easy is pain and sorrow, or, rather, pain and sorrow become parent joy. The hand trembles, as you may see, but the soul is all peace."

That peace which is the portion of the chosen servants of God is seldom unmixed with interior struggles. The joy of the Holy Ghost supposes trials which are dispensed to all; and it is the reward of those who learn from the sublime teachings of the gospel and the exercise of prayer how to possess their souls in patience. For this reason Mrs. Seton was led, by those who had the direction of her conscience, to seek in prayer and in the counsels of her spiritual advisers the strength and light which she needed for preserving the tranquillity of her soul. "I hope," Mr. Cheverus wrote to her, "you continue to enjoy that happy peace which surpasseth all understanding. Should it, however, be disturbed by doubts, anxieties, &c., do not get discouraged. In the midst of the storm, and when Jesus seems to be asleep, call upon him with earnestness; he will arise, and every thing will be calm within you." During the first year after her conversion she corresponded frequently with the Rev. Mr. Tisserant, already mentioned, who, residing not far from New York, was more easily accessible as her counsellor in the time of difficulty. The

instructions which he gave her were a source of great comfort in her trying situation, and may be read with advantage by every pious Christian. Having removed to her sister's residence on Staten Island during the fall of 1805, when the yellow fever was prevailing in New York, she was much perplexed in mind, and, among other things, in not being able to perform the religious duties to which she had been accustomed. While she was suffering these interior troubles, Mr. Tisserant conveyed to her the following excellent advice:—

"You are, no doubt, well convinced, madam, that I feel a most lively interest in all the cruel troubles, afflictions, and agitations which you have experienced, and the confidence which you have in me renders it unnecessary to give you any further assurances of what I say. Would that I had the power to put an end to all those difficulties! I should be happy even in being able to alleviate your sufferings; and, as you are of opinion that my advice will have this effect, I have not the slightest hesitation in giving it; and in doing so I allow the well-founded diffidence which I have in myself to be overcome by a desire to conform to your wishes. I think that in retiring to your sister's house you have acted for the best, and in remaining there you will do the will of God for the present. We should judge of his will in regard to our situation in this world from the nature of circumstances, when these present nothing incompatible with our duties, and particularly when to act otherwise would place us in an extraordinary position. But circumstances seem to have combined in directing you to your present situation in the house of a cherished sister. The ties of consanguinity and friendship, with the dictates of charity, superadded to the other considerations which led you thither, give them a decisive weight, and by pursuing a different course you would have placed yourself in a state which could have

been justified only by the supposition that the demands of religious duty required it. This, however, is not the case. You can perform your religious duties in your present situation. If you draw the distinction between the requirements of duty and those practices which are suggested only by the spirit of devotion, a great desire of perfection or of sensible consolations, you will perceive that you can, strictly speaking, discharge your obligations where you are. Confession and communion are of precept only once a year. You can absent yourself from mass, when there is a grave reason for so doing and if to assist at it would be attended with a serious inconvenience, as may be your case. You need have no scruple of conscience in your case, in requesting your pastor to dispense you from the precept of abstinence on Fridays and Saturdays, and I have no doubt that it will be granted, &c. As to what is not obligatory, there are circumstances in which we are not only permitted, but even bound, to lay it aside, for reasons less urgent than those which you may have. I am far from signifying to you that you ought to relinquish all practices of piety that are not strictly obligatory. Such a suggestion as this would be a pang to your heart; it would only add to the severe trials which it already suffers. The love which you have for your divine Saviour will lead you frequently to seize a propitious moment for enjoying the consolations imparted by your pious observances. But, in tracing the line of distinction between duty and that which is not so, I wish simply to prevent you from being disturbed by scruples, and to regulate that ardent zeal for all that relates to the glory of God and the salvation of souls which I have witnessed with so much pleasure in your words and actions, and which, if not restrained, might become too partial to your inclinations, would cause you to neglect more than is advisable your personal comfort, and, what is more, would exhibit our holy religion, among persons who do not profess

it, more inflexible than it really is on those points which are matters of supererogation, or, at most, requirements of the ecclesiastical law, from which a dispensation can be obtained for grave and sufficient reasons. In short, madam, I think that in your situation, after complying with your stricter duties, you may obtain a dispensation from those precepts of the Church which would place you under a serious restraint, and that you ought to omit those practices of piety which subject you to the inconveniences you have mentioned. I know how reluctantly this course will be pursued by a soul whose delight is to remain at the foot of the altar and there meditate on the tender love of her divine Spouse. I also consider this modification of your rule which you are compelled to adopt as a new trial which the Almighty sends you, and one different from those to which you have been accustomed. You are called upon to sacrifice to him even the sweet comforts of religion, and no doubt you will pass through this trial with the same success which has attended you in others. The dispositions of your soul, which you have described to me in so affecting a manner, leave no doubt in my mind on that score. With such dispositions you will draw upon yourself the grace of God, and this will enable you to accomplish all things. The meditation of the Holy Scripture will suggest to you many motives of encouragement, and afford you much consolation. I have met with several passages in saying my office. Tobias in his affliction said to God, 'I am in trouble, O Lord, but I know that after a storm thou bringest a calm, after tears and sorrow a transport of joy: but, O God of Israel, may thy holy name be blessed at all times and under all circumstances!' And Job exclaims:—'The Lord hath tried me as gold in the fire: my feet have followed in his paths: I have walked faithfully in the way which he made known to me: I have not deviated from it.' Calm your disquietude, also, in refer

ence to your dear and amiable children. You are much concerned about your two boys; but I am persuaded that your gentle and affectionate treatment will give you the victory over their hearts, and will enable you to avert hereafter the difficulties which your actual situation leads you to apprehend."

At the opening of the holy season of Lent, in the year 1800, Mrs. Seton was prevented by some grave reason from assisting at the solemn ceremonial of the Church; but, although debarred this satisfaction, she endeavored to compensate for its loss by the fervor of her private devotions, and applied herself with earnestness to the duties and practices which are prescribed at this penitential time. On this occasion Mr. Tissierant wrote to her, moderating her zeal, and directing her in the safe-keeping of that happy peace which Almighty God imparted to her soul:—

"*March 9, 1800.*—You tell me that you were prevented from going to church on Ash-Wednesday. The ceremonies of that day are well calculated to produce solemn impressions. If I did not know how deeply convinced you are of the nothingness of this world and of the necessity of penance, I would regret the more that you had been prevented from assisting at the distribution of the ashes, &c. I am edified, however, by the manner in which you passed that day in the midst of your little parish. Your Lent has commenced with a sacrifice and with the mortification of the will, and with good resolutions, which I hope God will bless; strengthen them by the practice of what the Church enjoins at this holy time. But do not exaggerate things. Remember what you have to do as a mother and in the employment which you have undertaken. All this is trying, and does not permit you to do what perhaps I would advise if you were in a cloister. If you should have a real doubt on any subject, consult your director. . . . You did well to reject the thoughts that tended

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to disturb the peace of mind which you enjoyed at the beginning of Lent. The recollection of our past faults ought not to beget disquietude. A mental calm that springs from a principle of pride or presumption, or leads to the neglect of duty, is indeed to be feared; but yours, accompanied as it is with a sense of your former sins, and with a constant disposition to do all you can in future for the love of our divine Master, and particularly to perform the works of penance proscribed at this holy time, is, in my opinion, the result of that filial confidence which the infinite goodness and power of our Heavenly Father ought to inspire, and is one of the most precious gifts that he bestows. It is a duty on our part to cherish it while it is granted. Endeavor, therefore, by being faithful to your resolutions, to discard whatever might deprive you of it. If it please God to withdraw it from time to time, strive to render yourself worthy of it again, by bearing the trial with courage and redoubling your fervor. It will give me pleasure to learn that you are accustoming yourself to banish those vague anxieties which sometimes haunt your mind. . . . The habit of dismissing them will give you more control over your imagination, and will contribute to your perfection as well as to your happiness."

During the course of the Lent, Mrs. Seton suffered much from sickness; and, notwithstanding her entire resignation to the will of God, her indisposition produced a depression of mind that tended to disturb the peace of her soul. Mr. Tisserant, while he encouraged her in recalling with Christian sentiments the thought of death, cautioned her against reflections that would lead her to apprehend the consequences of her malady:—

"March 16, 1800.—Your last letter greatly afflicts me, as I learn from it that you have been seriously indisposed, and that your sickness has left on your mind a deep impression relative to its immediate or ultimate consequences

A Christian should oftentimes, even in the enjoyment of health, contemplate his last end, and that dissolution which will terminate the present life. He should fancy to himself that this event may take place at any moment, and at the foot of the crucifix offer to God the sacrifice of the dearest considerations that bind him to this world, and by these preparatory means render more easy that final sacrifice which is inevitable. Bodily suffering is an admonition to the Christian to indulge in these sentiments, and the pious soul is careful not to neglect so salutary a practice. I have been much edified by the manner in which you have performed this duty, and I thank God for having given you that peaceful resignation which looks more to the decrees of his holy will than to the momentary suggestions of nature, and for having blessed you with so perfect a reliance upon his providential care in relation to your spiritual interests and whatever is most dear to you. May you always remain in these happy dispositions!"

Her sickness still continuing toward the end of Lent, Mr. Tisserant warned her against the indiscreet austerity into which she might have been led, directing her to postpone to some other period what was then beyond her physical strength, and suggesting the following sentiments for the exercise of her piety on the Friday of Holy Week:—"Cast yourself in the arms of an expiring Saviour; give yourself to him, and dwell upon the confidence and consolation which this great mystery should inspire. You have told me that the heart of Jesus was your refuge: let it be so always; retired within that asylum, what have you to fear, and what can appear to you burdensome or painful?"

For a clergyman whose enlightened counsel was a source of so much consolation to her, Mrs. Seton could not but entertain the most profound regard; and hence, upon the approach of the solemn occasion when she was to receive the

sacrament of confirmation at the hands of Bishop Carroll, she invited Mr. Tisserant to act as her sponsor, and to present her to the Church of God as a candidate for the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Her letter, however, did not reach him in time, and he wrote to her, lamenting the disappointment, and congratulating her upon the signal blessings she had received:—"I submit to the disappointment, and the more readily, as the choice which you have made of me, to witness your happiness and to be the surety of your holy resolutions, is so flattering and agreeable to me, that I must consider myself unworthy of the satisfaction it would have imparted. If I was deprived of so great a pleasure, you at least have received those precious graces which will confirm your faith, animate your courage for the martyrdom to which you have exposed yourself, and render fruitful the apostleship which is the result of your conversion and example. With these graces you have also received the Spirit of consolation, who, I trust, will make you more and more sensible of his divine and tender influences. Oh that I had been present at the moment when you received the character of soldier of Jesus Christ, and the strength to combat still more generously under his sacred banner!"

Shortly after this happy event, which took place in St. Peter's Church, New York, on the 26th of May, Mr. Tisserant embarked for Europe, much to the loss of Mrs. Seton, who valued his advice and friendly interest the more as religion was now her only comfort and support. Great also was her loss and affliction in being compelled to bid adieu to Mr. Filicchi, whose incomparable services to her could be imagined and felt, but not expressed in word. That he had been a true, constant, and devoted friend of her and her children was enough to have made him the object of their grateful and affectionate regard; but he was more than this. He had performed toward her the part of a brother.

When in a strange land she was overtaken by the bitterest affliction, he became her protector. He offered her a home in her widowhood, and even left the endearments of his own family to accompany her to her native shores. He it was who first directed her to the true path of eternal life: he also stood by her in every difficulty; in all her doubts and anxieties he enlightened, encouraged, and consoled her, and he did not desist a moment from his charitable zeal until he beheld her safely arrived in the haven of Catholic truth. And, when they whom the sacred ties of consanguinity should have led to share their abundance with her and her little ones were unmoved by the wants of her situation, he nobly exerted himself for their assistance, and still more nobly offered to supply all her necessities from the ample means of himself and his brother. Such friendship was not lost upon a lady of Mrs. Seton's elevated sentiments, nor upon a Christian of her accomplished virtue. She fully appreciated all that had been done in her behalf, as well as the prospect of still further kindness, and she knew that only a brother's heart could have prompted such a course. She therefore called him brother, and entertained for him the feelings of a sister; but the sincerity and warmth of her gratitude can be understood only from the eloquent and inimitable language which she herself has employed in depicting it. In a letter addressed to him on the 14th of March ensuing, the anniversary of her abjuration of Protestantism, she says:—"My dear Antonio, this day cannot be passed over without offering some part of it to my dear brother, who has largely shared the happiness it commemorates. Do you remember when you carried the poor little wandering sheep to the fold, and led it to the feet of its tender shepherd? Whose warning voice first said, 'My sister, you are in the broad way, and not in the right one'? Antonio's. Who begged me to seek the right

one? Antonio. Who led me kindly, gently in it? Antonio. And, when deceived and turning back, whose tender, persevering charity withhold my erring steps and strengthened my fainting heart? Antonio's. And who is my unfailing friend, protector, benefactor? Antonio! Antonio! Commissioned from on high, the messenger of peace, the instrument of mercy. My God, my God, my God, reward him! The widow's pleading voice, the orphan's innocent hands, are lifted to you to bless him. They rejoice in his love; oh, grant him the eternal joy of yours!" Such was the valued friend from whom she was about to be separated. On his part, also, a painful sacrifice was to be made. In her and her children he beheld an adopted family, the object of his deep and constant solicitude; in them he witnessed a trophy of his zeal and piety, a perpetual source of pleasure and edification in a strange land; the interest which he took in their welfare he considered the secret of the many favors he had received from Heaven. "Your letters," he wrote to her, "are to me models of language and style, a pattern of friendly expressions, a living example and incitement to virtue and godliness, a true blessing in my present wandering, wearisome life." In parting, it was the consolation of those mutually-cherished friends to reflect that religion and virtue had united them,—that one had visited "the widow and the fatherless in their tribulation," while the other had found the priceless treasure of faith, which would more than supply the loss of all earthly comforts and possessions.

Mrs. Seton, in the midst of an anti-Catholic society, was naturally called upon to advocate the cause of truth; but though she prudently availed herself of the opportunity to defend it, she did not urge it unnecessarily upon the attention of others. She thus writes to one of her Protestant friends, who had alluded to her conversion:—"I assure

you, my becoming a Catholic was a very simple consequence of going to a Catholic country, where it was impossible for any one, interested in any religion, not to see the wide difference between the first established faith, given and founded by our Lord and his apostles, and the various forms it has since taken; and, as I had always delighted in reading the Scriptures, I had so deep an impression of the mysteries of divine revelation, that, though full of the sweet thought that every good and well-meaning soul was right, I was determined, when I came home, both in duty to my children and my own soul, to learn all I was capable of understanding on the subject. If ever a soul did make a fair inquiry, our God knows that mine did, and every day of life increased more and more my gratitude to him for having made me what I am. Certainly, though, it was the knowledge of the Protestant doctrine with regard to faith^(*) that made me a Catholic; for, as soon as on inquiry I found that Episcopalians did not think everybody right, I was convinced my safe plan was to unite with the Church in which, at all events, they admitted that I would find salvation, and where also I would be secure of the apostolic succession, as well as of the many consolations which no other religion but the Catholic can afford. The whole is, that with the convictions of my conscience, my salvation depended on embracing the Catholic faith. I never obtrude my thoughts on the subject, but leave all to their own light and grace, while I enjoy mine. A true joy to me, indeed, the daily morning sacrifice, and our frequent and daily communion, when prepared! What a contrast to the morning sleep in former days! It has been my wealth in poverty and joy in deepest affliction." Notwithstanding this prudential course on the part of Mrs. Seton, she was liable to the usual annoyances of those who are disposed to assail the truth without being willing to respect its claims. Under these

circumstances, she was advised by Mr. Cheverus to defend her religion with prudence and moderation, but not to enter into discussion with such as were governed more by the spirit of contention than by the love of truth; as disputes of this kind generally lead to a violation of charity, instead of promoting any useful end. "I am aware," says he, "of the difficulties and troubles you must have to encounter in the midst of your acquaintances. When those who raise objections expect an answer, give them some short and clear reason of that hope which is in you. If they grow too warm, recommend only to them to read and examine at leisure, if they think it worth their while. Silence is the best answer to the scoffers. But, whether you speak or be silent, let your heart cry to the Lord in the hour of temptation. When you have done what you thought most proper at the time, you have committed no sin, even if afterward you should think that you ought to have acted in a different manner.

"Be not anxious, my dear madam, but rather rejoice in hope. Jesus has received you in the number of his true disciples, since, like them, you rejoice in your sufferings and afflictions. Like the blessed apostle whose festival we celebrate to-day, you welcome the cross as the greatest blessing and think yourself happy in being fastened to it. May God Almighty maintain you in these sentiments! May the love of Jesus keep your heart during this holy time, and prepare it to become a sanctuary worthy of him!"—*November 30, 1805, St. Andrew, Ap.*

These instructions of Mr. Cheverus were communicated about the beginning of Advent, 1805. At this time, while some of Mrs. Seton's relatives were very much opposed to her on the ground of religion, there was one who was united to her by the most intimate and holy friendship. We have already mentioned the name of Miss Cecilia Seton, her sis-

ter-in-law, as a person in whose virtuous training she took a most lively interest. She was very young, possessed of great personal attractions, and equally remarkable for the sweetness of her manners and the piety of her disposition. We may form some idea of the affectionate and virtuous intimacy that existed between her and Mrs. Seton from the following note, which she received from the latter in October of the same year.

"The sweetest and even the most innocent pleasures quickly pass in this life, and the dear moments of peace and love enjoyed with my Cecilia this morning appear only as a dream. But, as a dream pleasing and soothing to the mind often gives it a foretaste of something it earnestly covets, so my heart turns to the dear hope that it may one day enjoy your society even in this world; or, if otherwise ordained by our dear and Heavenly Father, the more certain hope of an eternal union before his throne cannot fail us but by our own negligence and perversion, against which we must pray literally without ceasing,—without ceasing, in every occurrence and employment of our lives. You know, I mean that prayer of the heart which is independent of place or situation, or which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God, as in a constant communication with him; as, for instance, when you go to your studies, you look up to him with sweet complacency, and think, O Lord, how worthless is this knowledge, if it were not for the enlightening my mind and improving it to thy service, or for being more useful to my fellow-creatures, and enabled to fill the part thy providence may appoint me! When going into society, or mixing with company, appeal to him who sees your heart and knows how much rather you would devote to him; but say, dear Lord, you have placed me here, and I must yield to them whom you have placed me in subjection to: oh keep my heart from all that would separate me

from thee! When you are excited to impatience, think for a moment how much more reason God has to be angry with you than you have for anger against any human being, and yet how constant is his patience and forbearance. And in every disappointment, great or small, let your dear heart fly direct to him, your dear Saviour, throwing yourself in his arms for refuge against every pain and sorrow. He never will leave you or forsake you."

The friendship of Mrs. Seton and her sister Cecilia was of that elevated character which acted as an encouragement to both in the love and pursuit of virtue; and it gradually produced impressions upon the mind of the latter which could not fail, with the grace of God, to result most favorably for her spiritual welfare. The happy influence of Mrs. Seton's piety and constancy was also much aided by an illness with which it pleased Divine Providence to afflict her relative toward the end of the year above mentioned. During her sufferings, Mrs. Seton consoled her by her visits, or by writing to her, and suggesting the most excellent acts of devotion for the time of sickness. The following we place before the reader as an illustration of her fervent piety and lively faith:—

"Oh that I could take the wing of the angel of peace, and visit the heart of my darling child! Pain and sorrow should take their flight; or, if ordained to stay as messengers from our Father of Mercies, to separate you from our life of temptation and misery, and prepare you for the reception of endless blessedness, I would repeat to you the story of his sufferings and anguish who chose them for his companions from the cradle to the grave. I would help you to separate all worldly thoughts from your breast, to yield the sinful body to the punishment it deserves, and to beg that sanctifying grace which will change temporal pain to eternal glory; and then I would again remind you of those sweet

instructions and heavenly precepts we read together the happy night we last enjoyed. . . . My Cecilia, I beg, beseech, implore you, to offer up all your pains, your sorrows and vexations, to God, that he will unite them with the sorrows, the pangs, and anguish, which our adored Redeemer bore for us on the cross, and entreat that a drop of that precious blood there shed may fall on you to enlighten, strengthen, and support your soul in this life and insure its eternal salvation in the next. He knows all our weakness and the failings of our hearts. As the father pities his own children he pities us, and has himself declared that he never will forsake the soul that confides in his name."

In this communication Mrs. Seton exhorts her beloved relative in a particular manner to pray, and in this spirit to offer her sufferings in union with those of the Son of God, because she knew well that fervent and persevering prayer is never rejected by the Almighty, and would be the surest means of obtaining for her sister the graces which her situation needed. But as her illness was growing worse, and she had as yet taken no decisive step for the change of her religion, Mrs. Seton began to fear lest she herself had been deficient in doing what duty required for the conversion of her sister; and, surrounded as the invalid was by her Protestant connections, who could not endure the mention of Catholicity among them, she was at a loss to know precisely how to act under these circumstances. She therefore applied for advice to the Rev. Mr. Cheverus, who sent her the following answer:—

Boston, January 24, 1866.

X "DEAR MADAM:—

"I must tell you first that your conscience ought to be free from scruples about the past, since you have done in

regard to your interesting sister every thing which you thought discretion and prudence could allow.

"In her present situation is it your duty to go farther? I am at a loss myself how to give an answer to this question. I have for these few days consulted in prayer the Father of lights; I have endeavored to place myself in your situation. Here is the result, which, however, I propose to you with the utmost diffidence.

"Neither the obstacles you mention, nor the sickly state of the dear child, permit to instruct her in points of controversy. What you have told her till now appears to me nearly sufficient.* I would recall to her, when opportunities should offer, the amiable and pious wish of living one day in a convent and there to become a member of the Church. Should she ask any questions, I would answer her in few words without entering into the particular merits of the question,—telling her that when she is better you would examine those matters together; that at present it is enough to know Jesus and him crucified; to put all her trust in him, to suffer with him, &c.; . . . to wish to become a member of his Church. Which church is his? she will perhaps say. Answer: The Catholic, because the most ancient, &c. If she asks no questions, I would confine myself to what you have said to her before. It is important that you may continue to visit her. Every thing that would put an end to your intercourse with her must be avoided.

"The most embarrassing circumstance will be when you see her near the period of the fatal disorder. Then, perhaps, you will be with her oftener and alone. Let the love of our adorable Saviour in his sacrament and on the cross be the subject of your discourse. You might also mention

* She had probably learned from Mrs. Seton the principal points of Catholic doctrine.

the anointing of the sick in St. James, and if she desires it, and it can be done, procure to her the blessing of receiving the last sacraments. Could they be hard-hearted enough to refuse such a request, and at such a time? The whole weight of their displeasure will fall upon you, but God has given you strength to bear it, and will make rich amends by his interior consolations. It is probable, however, that you will not find an opportunity of accomplishing this. Should it unhappily be the case, you will have nothing to reproach yourself with; for if you attempt to do more than the above, it is almost certain that you will be hindered from doing any thing at all.

"Your beloved sister has been made by baptism a member of the Church. Wilful error, I have reason to think, has never separated her from that sacred body. Her *singular innocence of mind and ardent piety* have also, very likely, preserved her from offending God in any grievous manner; and I hope, in consequence, that even if she cannot receive the sacraments she will be a member of the triumphant Church in heaven, although it would be to her an unspeakable advantage to receive the sacraments, and would render her salvation more secure. Dreadful indeed is the situation of those who, being cut off from the Church, or having offended the Almighty, depart from this world without those heavenly remedies which the Church has in store for her dying children. Happy those who like you feel their heart warm, and abound with joy and peace in the breaking of the heavenly bread, in the celebration of the holy festivals." X

By this wise direction Mrs. Seton was equally consoled and instructed in the course she was to pursue. She was to make every effort consistent with a discreet and enlightened zeal to procure for her beloved relative the consolations of the sacraments; but, in the event of this being

impracticable, she was to suggest to her suffering friend such considerations as, with the help of divine grace, would awaken in her heart sentiments of perfect love and contrition, and thus prepare her for a happy death. It pleased the Almighty, however, to raise her from the bed of sickness and afford her an opportunity of paying a more signal homage to the truth, of which he has made his holy Church the depositary. After her recovery, Miss Seton turned her attention more particularly to the examination of this subject, and, in defiance of the most violent opposition on the part of her relatives, she at length resolved to abandon the errors in which she had been educated, and to embrace the Catholic faith. No effort was left untried to dissuade her from this step; and such was the blind and determined zeal excited against her, that her connections kept her in close confinement for several days, threatening every extravagance they could think of; for instance, that she should not live with the corrupter of her mind, (Mrs. Seton,) even if she did become a Catholic, but be sent away to the West Indies, in a vessel then ready for the voyage; that she would cause the destruction of Mrs. Seton and deprive her children of bread; and that, if no shorter way presented itself, they would petition the legislature to remove Mrs. Seton out of the State, &c. But Miss Cecilia, fully alive to the importance of the subject, and well persuaded that no considerations whatever should be suffered to interfere with her duty to God, was prepared to make every sacrifice in order to obey the call of divine grace. The Almighty supported her courage in a peculiar manner during her trial, moving her against the fiercest opposition, and, after due preparation, she was admitted into the true Church on the 20th of June, 1806.

The consequences of this step were, in a temporal point of view, most painful. All her friends abandoned her, and

left her unprovided for in the world; and for a generous and affectionate heart like hers, and for a young person in the bloom of youth, being only fourteen years of age, of delicate health, and the favorite of her family, it is difficult to conceive how cruel must have been the pang that thus severed the ties of nature. But the Almighty seems to have selected her as an occasion of signalizing his tender mercies and displaying the wondrous efficacy of his grace. She regretted the loss of friends who had always been dear to her; but well convinced that her friends and relatives could not justify her at the tribunal of God, if she resisted the known truth and the inspirations of divine grace, she accounted all the considerations of flesh and blood as worthless in comparison with the securing of her eternal interests, and resolutely declared to her family that she had become a Catholic, and that nothing would ever break the bonds that united her to the true Church. Her conduct throughout this trying ordeal evinced a heroism worthy of the brightest days of Christianity. Excluded from the protection of her relatives, who solemnly avowed that she should never re-enter their houses or be suffered to associate with her family, Miss Seton sought a refuge under the humble but hospitable roof of her sister-in-law. Here she was welcomed with open arms; and these two pious and fervent souls found, in the enjoyment of each other's society, a support under the heavy crosses which they had to endure, and a mutual encouragement to the faithful and constant practice of duty. The reception of the youthful convert into her house, although a matter of duty for Mrs. Seton under existing circumstances, became the occasion of increased aversion for her on the part of her connections. Some of them would not permit even their children to speak to her or hers, while others barely allowed her to enter their dwellings. Even they who professed to be the ministers of charity,

Bishop Moore and Rev. Mr. Hobart, her former pastors, arrayed themselves against her, and, through bigotry or interest, called upon those who might have assisted her in her establishment, and warned them against having any communication with her. In this state of things, all the energy of her soul was brought into requisition. Her life was a continual sacrifice and suffering, for which, however, she was strengthened by the grace of God, and by the sympathy and counsels of the new class of friends who had gathered around her. Soon after the conversion of Miss Cecilia, Dr. Matignon, of Boston, addressed a letter to Mrs. Seton, expressive of the high regard which he entertained for her, and encouraging her to continue faithful in the new paths which the Almighty had marked out to her. "Your perseverance," he says, "and the help of grace, will finish in you the work which God has commenced, and will render you, I trust, the means of effecting the conversion of many others. You already experience much consolation in the step taken by your dear sister, who has been led not less by your example than by the maladies and afflictions dispensed from Heaven, to embrace with so much fervor the only way to eternal life. The determination she evinced in this affair, being yet so young, and despite the serious difficulties she had to contend with, is most assuredly, as you say, a visible wonder of divine grace. Though deprived of all human assistance, or, at least, debarred the aid she has need of, Almighty God will not abandon her, and your prayers will not be vain. May you soon have the same happiness in the two cherished beings whom you mention with so much hope! The pleasures as well as the troubles of this world pass very rapidly; happy they who love their friends only in God,

* Two sisters-in-law of Mrs. Seton, who were favorably disposed toward the Catholic faith, and one of whom subsequently embraced it, as will appear in the sequel.

and who hope with reason to meet each other hereafter in his eternal kingdom."

Among the chief sources of comfort which Mrs. Seton enjoyed in her affliction was the society of the pious, amiable, and accomplished family of Mr. James Barry, a respectable merchant of New York. With all the warmth and generosity of the Irish character, they united a spirit of religion and blandness of manner which entitled them to universal respect and esteem. They were honored with the particular friendship of Bishop Carroll. Mrs. Seton was a frequent visitor at their residence, where she was always welcome, and often enjoyed their bounteous and cordial hospitality; at the same time availing herself of their intelligence and piety to seek advice in the moment of need. These attentions which she received from the Barry family were always gratefully remembered. In writing to a friend about this time, she alludes with a spirit of thankfulness to the "Barrys, whose tenderness and attention to the poor fanatic," she says, "are my sweetest earthly pleasure."

From her correspondence with the Messrs. Filicchi she also derived much comfort and encouragement. Writing to her from London, November 8, 1806, in answer to a letter from her, in which she probably mentioned the increased opposition on the part of her family, Mr. Antonio sends her the most fervent exhortation to persevere in the noble fortitude which she had already displayed. "If blessed are those who are in tears," he says, "you, my beloved sister, are blessed indeed. Courage and perseverance! The crown of everlasting glory awaits only those, you know, who persevere to the end. . . . Pray for your persecutors. Your forbearance, your fortitude, your charity, your piety, will put them to the blush at last. If not, God and I are your protectors—of whom shouldst thou be afraid?" The

intelligence of his safe arrival in Leghorn, in the midst of his family, filled her heart with joy and gratitude, and she hastened to spread the news among her friends. "What could I do," she writes to him, "but say *Te Deum*; first carry the letter to Mrs. Barry, then to Mr. Hurley, or rather to our family of pastors, who shared my joy, gave thanks for your escape, and admired that Providence who provides such a brother for the poor little forsaken woman, and permitted her to go the next morning to communion, to offer the thanksgiving of inestimable value? With my whole soul I did so." The escape to which she alludes was a providential deliverance of Mr. Filicchi from a most perilous situation while crossing the Alps on his way to Italy. The account of this circumstance, which he sent to Mrs. Seton, is equally honorable to his piety as a Christian, and indicative of the profound veneration which he entertained for her character as a servant of God.

"On the dreadful summit of Mount Cenis, on the Alps, on my way into Italy, I truly did attribute to the efficacy of your prayers in my behalf the preservation of my limbs and life. I was in the *diligence*, or mail-stage with four wheels and four horses, descending the mountain in a dark, wintry night, blowing and snowing, and every thing around us covered with snow. We had a light to guide our path; but on a sudden, by the carelessness of our driver, the light was put out, and we found ourselves in the most imminent danger of missing our way and falling over the precipice. The driver declared that he was not able to discern his path. We were all in the pangs of death. We could not alight, we could not walk in the depth of the snow, we could not expect any human succor, and were forced to go on, trembling at each step of our horses, as if about to tumble down into the abyss. A French lady, our fellow-traveller with an officer, was in a fit of convulsions, when most unex-

pectedly a lantern appeared of a poor shepherd coming up the mountain as a guardian angel to save us. It was on Monday night, the 8th of December, the day of the festival of our Blessed Lady's Conception. Early in that morning, they had all laughed at my going to mass; but fear drew afterward from their lips, against their will, the awful acknowledgment of their forsaken principles of religion. I looked immediately on you as my principal intercessor, and you must have had certainly a great share in my deliverance. What wonder, then, in my readiness to be serviceable to you? Through your good example, they find me now a better Christian than I was, and through you my mercantile concerns are blessed by God with an uninterrupted success. I shall not therefore be so foolish as to desert your cause. Pray only our Divine Redeemer to extend his mercy toward me, for the most important welfare in our next life. If I have been happy enough to be the instrument of introducing you to the gate of the true Church of Christ here below, keep me fast by you when called up stairs: we must enter together into heaven. Amen." To realize this blessed hope was the object of Mrs. Seton's ardent prayers.

Amid the difficulties of her position she was comforted especially by the expressions of regard and friendship which she received from Bishop Carroll and the Rev. Mr. Cheverus. The former, writing to her, under date of May 23, 1807, after giving his opinion on a matter of business, thus speaks of her and her situation:—"I would add, if you stood the least in need of any motives which I could suggest, my encouragement to you to persevere in the exercise of your constancy, under the trials to which you have been subjected since our separation.* Though you are persecuted for obey-

* He had administered confirmation in New York, in May of the preceding year.

ing the dictates of your conscience, and are not allowed to speak with freedom to persons dear and closely allied to you, yet your example, and patient, I may add, joyful suffering, must produce and have already worked their effect on the consciences of them who place a higher value on their salvation than all earthly things. For your perseverance I feel no apprehension; but great is my solicitude for those who are debarred from receiving the instruction you could so well give them, and deprived of the bread of life; but still I trust in God's fatherly goodness toward them, who is so able to counteract the impediments and delusions which human prudence or errors cast in the way of his favored servants." He then begs to be remembered by her children, to whose "innocent prayers" he attaches great importance. Bishop Carroll, although he gave Mrs. Seton the strongest evidences of the high esteem which he had for her, was careful to maintain her in the path of humility, convinced that by this means only could she be preserved from spiritual shipwreck. He therefore tells her:—"Whatever I learn or hear of you increases my solicitude, respect, and admiration. But attribute no merit to yourself on this account. Whatever is estimable in you, either by nature or grace, is God's gift and his property; and it is beneath the dignity of a Christian, who has ever meditated on the folly as well as the criminality of pride, to glory in that which belongs not to him."

During his stay in New York, Mrs. Seton found a faithful friend in the Rev. Mr. Hurley, who, as she expresses it, was "rigid and severe in a calm, but, whenever she had any trouble, most indulgent and compassionate." She knew well how to appreciate the good-will and kind assistance of him and so many others who were truly interested in her real happiness. In the midst of friends whom religion had substituted for those whom the world had taken away, the

bitterness of her trials seemed to be forgotten, and her soul enjoyed a delightful peace. She thus alludes to this subject in a letter to Mr. Anthony Filicchi:—"Upon my word, it is very pleasant to have the name of being persecuted, and yet enjoy the sweetest favors; to be poor and wretched, and yet be rich and happy; neglected and forsaken, yet cherished and tenderly indulged by God's most favored servants and friends. If now your sister did not wear her most cheerful and contented countenance she would be indeed a hypocrite. 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' Rejoice, rejoice."

Animated with such sentiments, Mrs. Seton's constant effort was, according to the advice of the apostle, to "overcome evil with good," and, by showing in her actions the excellence of the faith to which she had been admitted, to subdue the unchristian spirit arrayed against her. Her sister Cecilia walked closely in her footsteps, adhering faithfully to the advice of her spiritual directors, to illustrate in her conduct and in the purity of her life the beauty of that religion which she had embraced. The instruction which the Rev. Mr. Hurley gave her on this subject* will be useful to all who read it in a spirit of Christian submission. After alluding to the happiness of serving God, he says:—"It is this which you are in quest of, and which, being humble of heart, you will assuredly find. Your setting out in this pursuit was strongly marked with the divine predilection; and, as it was then my duty to observe it, the same duty now compels me to remind you of it, and to admonish you that in all things you give proof of the sanctity of your vocation, and vindicate, by your exemplary conduct, by your submission, your humility and patience, that holy religion into whose mysteries you have been now so long initiated.

* In a letter from Philadelphia, dated August 29, 1807.

'Look at our conduct,' was the almost only answer which the primitive Christians made to their calumniators: in fact, it proved to be such as to leave no place for a rejoinder. The arguments which they deduced from their sublimated morals, in favor of their faith, were nearly irrefragable, as we may judge from the wonderful progress it made. Alas! could we but say so now, what converts would we not see! how many returning to the fold of Christ! But God is wonderful in all his ways. He has put it in your power to magnify the wonders of his mercy, and let me exhort you not to neglect it. To doubt of your doing so, as also of your perseverance, I dare not. The thought itself I would banish from my mind as a temptation. Your deportment throughout the entire of those vicissitudes with which 'the Orient from on high hath visited you,' precludes any such unhallowed idea. But we never can be too cautious, nor as circumspect as our vocation in Christ Jesus would require. The path which you have so gloriously entered is at the best an arduous one, and beset with difficulties which life alone will end with. In meeting them we have indeed this great consolation:—that our Model met them before us; that he forewarned his disciples that all who should truly desire to serve him would encounter them also; that they are the only sure, unerring vehicles to transcendental regions, and that by tolerating them future glory should be revealed to us. And what consolation tantamount to that which flows from the very source of every good? from that fount which rises unto life everlasting, and from which alone we can draw forth with joy and gladness? You, my dear child, have explored even the head of this spring. You have participated of its pellucid waters, and have experienced its exhilarating, sublimating effects. Perhaps I have been your guide to it; nay, have administered to you its refreshing portions. If so, let me have the comfort, both here and hereafter, to find that

my subserviency has been profitable, has been effectual. Remember the 17th of June.* It stands recorded in heaven, and must be in your heart. Meritless as I am, witness of the transactions of that day, others bear witness likewise. When we shall be called upon, may we be found side-aside!"

By a strict observance of the excellent counsels here imparted, Miss Seton became "a beautiful ornament" of the religion which she professed, and eventually regained the admiration even of those who thought her wisdom folly. A lady of her acquaintance, who was much attached to her, having become dangerously ill, she visited her daily, and nursed her with the most assiduous care.† Here it was, at the deathbed of a common friend, that Miss Seton had an opportunity of meeting her relatives; and such was the sweet submissiveness of manner and prudence of behavior exhibited by her on this occasion, that she completely conquered the opposition of her family, who all invited her to return among them. If Mrs. Seton did not experience the same partial justice at their hands, it was not from a want of charitable and kind deportment in their regard. When, in the circumstance just related, or at other times, she met with those of her connections who had placed themselves in a hostile position, she manifested the same cordiality and affection as if she had no cause for complaint. But what was denied on

* According to her own statement, she was "united to the Catholic Church on the 20th of June, 1804." Mr. Hurley may have mistaken the precise date, or he refers to some religious act different from that which Miss Seton designates as her admission into the Church.

† Mrs. Seton also alluded to this lady in her last moments, and thus speaks of her departure from this world:—"Oh, how awful! without prayer, without sacrament, without faith! Terrified, impatient, wretched! How shall we ever praise enough that mercy which has placed us in the bosom of our mother!"

the part of her family she found in the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of her religion; so much so that she wore a contented and joyful countenance, and appeared to have lost nothing, even for this world, by the sacrifices which conscience had compelled her to make. In a letter to Mr. Philip Filicchi, who had so effectually aided her by his enlightened instructions in the investigation of Catholic truth, she describes in a forcible manner the happiness she possessed under all her difficulties, and the continual efforts which she made for the sanctification of her soul.

"It is best," she says, "to be obliged to conquer the principle most apt to blind me in my pursuit; and my daily object is to keep close to your first advice, (with St. Francis,) to take every event gently and quietly, and oppose good-nature and cheerfulness to every contradiction; which succeeds so well that now it is an acknowledged opinion that Mrs. William Seton is in a very happy situation, and Mr. Wilkes says, speaking of *his* professions, 'Yet Providence does not do so much for me as for you, as it makes you happy and contented in every situation.' Yet—indeed how can he build who has not the Rock for his foundation? But Mrs. William Seton is obliged to watch every moment to keep up the reality of this appearance. You know, Filicchi, what it costs to be always humble and satisfied, though when this disposition is familiarized it is the true treasure. Do—do pray continually for that soul whose salvation has already cost you so much care. While enjoying the *greatest happiness on earth*, which I obtain sometimes three times a week, (the weather and children sometimes deprive,) imagine the effusions of warm and ardent affections at that moment of grateful joy and triumph, conscious that nothing on earth can add to or take from this infinite good which supplies the place of all other to the confiding soul, whose very desolation in human possessions is the best foundation for this unful-

ling happiness. And then, how came this knowledge to my soul? whose blessed hands guided it to its only treasure? who encouraged it when sinking, and drew it on when afraid of its own salvation? And my darling children—I teach them to consider you too the source of all our consolation."

As a truly Christian mother, Mrs. Seton allowed nothing, after the salvation of her own soul, to occupy so important a place in her thoughts and plans as the spiritual welfare of her children. They had entered with her into the fold of truth; and she taught them, both by word and example, to prize this gift of faith above every worldly consideration. So natural and affectionate was the manner in which she endeavored to impress upon their youthful minds the obligation of serving God, that it could not fail to produce its full effect. Religion and duty were subjects not reserved only for the class of catechism or the moment of prayer; they were frequently suggested to their attention. From the words of the parent, exhaling on every fitting occasion the spirit of fervent piety, her offspring imbibed a love of virtue, and learned how to appreciate its inestimable blessings. Nothing can surpass the admirable tact with which Mrs. Seton conciliated the warm affection of her children, and directed her influence over them to the glory of God and their personal sanctification. Her language was such as to inspire them with noble sentiments and virtuous aspirations; to make them sensible that their highest reward was to be found in the good-will of a loving parent, and in the consciousness of having fulfilled their duty to Almighty God. In answering a note which she had received from her eldest daughter, then ten years of age, she says:—"Your little letter gave joy to my heart, which loves you more than I can express, and earnestly prays to our dear Lord Jesus to bless you and make you his own." On another occasion, while her daughter was receiving instructions from the Rev.

Mr. Hurley, probably as a preparation for her first communion, Mrs. Seton wrote to her in the following words:—

“MY DARLING DAUGHTER:—

“You must not be uneasy at not seeing me either yesterday or to-day. To-morrow I hope to hold you to my heart, which prays for you incessantly that God may give you grace to use well the precious hours of this week; and, I repeat, you have it in your power to make me the happiest of mothers, and to be my sweet comfort through every sorrow, or to occasion the heaviest affliction to my poor soul that it can meet with in this world; and, as your example will have the greatest influence on your dear little sisters also, and you do not know how soon you may be in the place of their mother to them, your doing your duty faithfully is of the greatest consequence, besides what you owe to God and your own soul. . . . Pray him, supplicate him, to make you his own. . . . Remember that Mr. Hurley is now in the place of God to you: receive his instructions as from heaven, as no doubt your dear Saviour has appointed them as the means of bringing you there.”

The piety, fervor, and unction of this maternal exhortation sufficiently indicate the ardor and purity of the love that dictated it. Mrs. Seton's great ambition and happiness was to educate her children as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. With this view her two sons, as we have before stated, were placed at Georgetown College, their location at Montreal being then impracticable. But it had always been the wish of Mr. Anthony Filicchi, their generous friend and benefactor, that they should be raised at the institution in Montreal; and he gave their mother a distant hope that she herself, with her little girls, might be admitted into a convent there, and employ her talents in the instruction of youth,

while her children would have the facility of being thoroughly trained in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic religion. This hope Mrs. Seton indulged rather as a delightful dream than as a prospect to be subsequently realized, because it appeared to her too much happiness to be enjoyed during her earthly pilgrimage. But her thoughts were more practically directed to it by the Rev. William Valentine Dabourg, President of St. Mary's College in Baltimore. He became acquainted with her in the following way. Having visited the city of New York in the autumn of 1806, he was one morning offering up the holy sacrifice of mass in St. Peter's Church, when a lady presented herself at the communion-rail, and, bathed in tears, received the Blessed Sacrament at his hands. He was struck with the uncommon deportment and piety of the communicant, and when afterward seated at the breakfast-table with the Rev. Mr. Sibourd, one of the pastors of the Church, he inquired who she was, rightly judging in his mind that it was Mrs. Seton, of whose conversion and edifying life he had been informed. Before Mr. Sibourd had time to answer his question, a gentle tap at the door was heard, and the next moment Mrs. Seton was introduced, and knelt before the priest of God to receive his blessing. Entering into conversation with her respecting her sons and her intentions in their regard, he learned from her the views and wishes of Mr. Filicchi, as stated above, and the remote expectation she had of removing herself, with her daughters, to Canada. Mr. Dabourg, who was a man of enlarged views and remarkable enterprise, no sooner became acquainted with the design which she entertained of retiring at some future period into a religious community, for the welfare of herself and her children, than he suggested the practicability of the scheme within the limits of the United States. Mrs. Seton immediately wrote to Bishop Carroll, informing him of what had passed between her and

Mr. Dubourg, and requesting his advice in the matter. "I could not venture," she says, "to take a further step in so interesting a situation without your concurrence and direction, which also, I am assured, will the more readily obtain for me the blessing of him whose will alone it is my earnest desire to accomplish." After mentioning the particular trials she had to contend with in New York, and assuring Dr. Carroll that she had yielded in condescension to her opponents every point possible consistently with her peace for the hour of death, she continues:—"And for that hour, my dear sir, I now beg you to consider, while you direct me how to act for my dear little children, who in that hour, if they remain in their present situation, would be snatched from our dear faith as from an accumulation of error as well as misfortune to them. For myself, certainly the only fear I can have is that there is too much of self-seeking in pleading for the accomplishment of this object, which, however, I joyfully yield to the will of the Almighty, confident that, as he has disposed my heart to wish above all things to please him, it will not be disappointed in the desire, whatever may be his appointed means. The embracing a religious life has been, from the time I was in Loughorn, so much my hope and consolation, that I would at any moment have embraced all the difficulties of again crossing the ocean to attain it, little imagining it could be accomplished here. But now my children are so circumstanced that I could not die in peace (and you know, dear sir, we must make every preparation) except I felt the full conviction I had done all in my power to shield them from it: in that case it would be easy to commit them to God."

While Mrs. Seton was consulting Bishop Carroll in regard to the important arrangement suggested by Mr. Dubourg, this gentleman was conferring with the Rev. Messrs Matignon and Cheverus, of Boston, upon the same subject

After having weighed the matter attentively, they came to the conclusion that her Canada scheme should be abandoned, and that it would be preferable to exert her talents in the way proposed by Mr. Dubourg. Mr. Cheverus wrote to her, "hoping that this project would do better for her family, and being sure it would be very conducive to the progress of religion in this country." It was the opinion, however, of these distinguished clergymen that the execution of the design should not be precipitate; and they therefore advised her, through Mr. Dubourg, "to wait the manifestation of the Divine will—the will of a Father most tender, who will not let go the child afraid to step alone." The wise forethought of Dr. Matignon led him to believe that Mrs. Seton was called, in the designs of God's providence, to be the instrument of some special mercies that he wished to dispense to the Church in this country. "I have only to pray God," he wrote to her, "to bless your views and his, and to give you the grace to fulfil them for his greater glory. *You are destined, I think, for some great good in the United States, and here you should remain in preference to any other location.* For the rest, God has his moments, which we must not seek to anticipate, and a prudent delay only brings to maturity the good desires which he awakens within us." Bishop Carroll, in answer to Mrs. Seton's inquiries, informed her that, although he was entirely ignorant of all particulars, yet, to approve the plan of Mr. Dubourg, it was enough for him to know that it had the concurrence of Dr. Matignon and Mr. Cheverus.

Mr. Dubourg, whose penetrating mind and enterprising spirit were so instrumental in shaping the destiny of Mrs. Seton, was born in 1766, at Cape François, in the island of St. Domingo. Having been sent to France for his education, he there embraced the ecclesiastical state, and went through his course of study in a seminary of St. Sulpitius.

Soon after his elevation to the priesthood, he was compelled to fly from that country by the violent persecution which was then raging against religion and its ministers, and he went to Spain, where he lived for two years. He then embarked for the United States, where not long after his arrival he became a member of the Society of St. Sulpitius, at Baltimore.⁽¹⁰⁾ The year after, (1790,) he was appointed by Bishop Carroll president of the college at Georgetown, which, under his direction and with the aid of able professors, acquired a high reputation before the public. The Sulpitians having opened a collegiate establishment in Havana, Mr. Dubourg was sent to the aid of his brethren in that city in 1798; but circumstances having combined to frustrate their efforts, he returned the following year to Baltimore, where in conjunction with his *confères* he commenced an institution for the education of youth, and laid the foundation of St. Mary's College. The design was encouraged by his superiors, particularly as it was hoped that the establishment would furnish candidates for the ecclesiastical state. Mr. Dubourg had brought with him from Cuba several young men, who with others from the same country were the first pupils of St. Mary's. American youths were not admitted in the beginning, as the rising institution at Georgetown was considered amply sufficient for the wants of the students furnished by the United States. Full of energy, Mr. Dubourg erected on the seminary grounds spacious buildings, which were specially adapted to the purposes of a collegiate establishment, and the increasing patronage of the public soon gave evidence that his views and efforts were duly appreciated and would lead to permanent usefulness.

A mind like his—of quick perception and comprehensive grasp, fertile in expedients and generally happy in the selection of such as were most effective—could not fail to discover in Mrs. Seton a woman of superior worth, and one

whose eminent qualities might be employed with the most signal advantage to religion and society. On her part, Mrs. Seton was much amazed at the idea of her being considered a fit instrument for promoting the interest of the Church; because she was far from forming a just estimate of her own abilities. She knew, however, that the ways of God are very different from those of men, and she bowed submissively to his designs in relation to her, hoping by the path of obedience to ascertain and fulfil them. In a letter to Mr. Filicchi, after stating the views of Messrs. Maignon and Cheverus that she was destined to forward the progress of the true faith, she adds:—"The very idea is enough to turn a stronger brain; but I know very well He sees differently from man, and, as obedience is his favorite service and cannot lead me wrong, according to the old rule I look neither behind nor before, but straight upward, without thinking of human calculations." In this way she resigned herself entirely into the hands of God, awaiting the further orders of his providence, to be disposed of as he might indicate through the voice of her superiors.

Urged by the counsels of individuals so fully entitled to her confidence and respect, Mrs. Seton did not hesitate to relinquish the idea of removing to Canada. The opinion of Mr. Philip Filicchi, whom she had also consulted, further encouraged her in the renunciation of that project and consoled her for the failure of her hopes. About the beginning of November, 1807, in replying to a letter which she had received from him, she says:—"Your letter is indeed a cordial one. I often read it to encourage and strengthen me in the disappointment of not being permitted to fulfil the so long anticipated removal of my family to Canada; which plan, originating in the benevolence and precautions of your Antonio for our welfare, had been long contemplated in my female fancy (which you know must be active) as one of the

sweet dispositions of Providence among the many it has effected for us through him. But your opinion, added to the united sentiments of those persons whose will is my law, has banished even the thoughts of it, (voluntarily indulged,) though naturally they present themselves on every occasion of difficulty so frequent in the particular situation in which we are placed. Quite sure I am, many would await us there; but they could scarcely be combined of materials so repulsive to my nature."

While in this state of suspense, looking forward to the opportunities that God would send her for accomplishing the plan of Mr. Dubourg, Mrs. Seton's position in New York became more difficult and embarrassing. In the fall of 1807, the board of the students attending Mr. Harris's school, which we have mentioned before, fell short of the maintenance of her family: the boys who lodged in her establishment were very unfit companions for her children; and their parents, discovering her inability to control them, thought that the advantages of their situation were much lessened by this circumstance, and complained personally on the subject, so that her remaining in it was a matter of favor. Add to this that the academy of Mr. Harris was to continue for three years longer, Mrs. Seton's expenses in fuel and house-rent were enormous, her children were prevented six months in the year from attending the services of the Church, and she herself could assist at them only with inconvenience, though to be present at the offices of religion was her only comfort. In this state of things, Mrs. Seton, urged on the one hand by the shortcomings of her revenue and on the other by the spiritual dangers to which her children were exposed, after having conferred with her pious and enlightened friend, Mrs. Barry, and received the express direction of the Rev. Mr. Sibourd, wrote to Bishop Carroll to solicit his advice in so important an emergency. For herself, as

she said, she was well assured that difficulties and crosses were the best companions of a Christian, and were peculiarly necessary to keep her views in the right direction; but she was compelled to claim his indulgence in a consideration so intimately connected with the happiness of her *dear ones*. She therefore unfolded to him all the circumstances of her case that she might be guided entirely by his decision. But the humble and filial manner in which she approached him is worthy of particular notice. After stating the reasons which induced her to encroach upon his valuable time, she says:—"Now then, dear sir, I imagine you seated in your elbow-chair, and my poor self at your feet; and in the first place tell you, from the time Filicchi mentioned his resolution that my boys should go to Montreal, I have considered it as a shelter offered us by Providence for the safety of my little girls, in respect to their faith, and security when it shall please God to remove me from them. You know their situation and dangers from their connections; therefore it is useless to mention it, or my own view of advancing my own salvation. The means of executing this plan amount to six hundred dollars per annum, as certain, and liberty to claim twice that sum from the subscription Filicchi obtained for us; also in the hands of Mr. M., five hundred dollars present. I have certainly the hope that my talents, such as they are, might be made useful in the instruction of children and assist our maintenance." She then details the difficulties of her position as mentioned above, and proceeds with the following statement:—"The sacrifices I should make in leaving this place are centred in the dear converted sister, who now lives with her brother, (the other dear girls are not permitted to see me,) and the dear Barrys, who are individually dearer to me than any friend I have. For every other connection, they have so much distrust and suspicion of my character, considering, and justly, that

every action is involved in my religious principles, that they certainly would rather consider it as a relief, if they knew I was in a situation conformable to my own peace. If you think it best to waive all delicacy with respect to these gentlemen who employ me, and not leave the place without their dismissal, making the best of circumstances until some providential change takes place, I shall feel every thing reconciled by your decision, and in every event be convinced it is the will of God. If you think the boys may properly be removed to Montreal, and that I may remove with them, it will be my greatest security to be authorized by your judgment and permission." Mrs. Seton resorted again to the plan of settling in Canada, as it was probably the only one that appeared to her practicable in the immediate urgency of her case. The answer which Bishop Carroll returned at this important juncture was characterized by his usual wisdom and prudence. He informed Mrs. Seton that her two sons at Georgetown College were doing well; but that if six hundred dollars a year would be sufficient at Montreal for their education and maintenance, and that of her amiable daughters, it was a great inducement for her to remove thither, where her talents would be highly useful, if the good ladies of the convent would employ them. He stated, however, an objection to this plan, which, he thought, deserved attentive consideration. "If your girls," he asked, "become dissatisfied and unhappy at Montreal, or their health injured by the climate, so that you should be obliged to leave it, (for you could not consent to let them depart without you,) are you confident of being enabled to re-establish yourself at New York?" This was a question which required to be satisfactorily answered to her own mind. As to the contract she had entered into with the Rev. Mr. Harris, principal of the school, Bishop Carroll remarked:—"Surely, my dear madam, if you can-

not fulfil your engagements without exposing your dear daughters to improper company and occasions dangerous to the purity of their minds, you ought to take effectual measures to persuade the gentleman to consent to release you from your engagements: after which, motives of economical prudence seem to require of you to make a trial of Montreal, after being well assured that you have not been misinformed as to the expense; for indeed it is incredible to me that it can be so moderate."

These directions from Bishop Carroll were received by Mrs. Seton about the beginning of December, 1807. In the following spring the difficulties of her pensionate already mentioned had become still more embarrassing, and, having abandoned the idea of removing to Canada, she was patiently awaiting the further manifestation of Divine Providence in her regard, sure that it would point out to her some other way when the proper time arrived. Such was the situation of her affairs when she incidentally met with the Rev. Mr. Dubourg at the residence of a gentleman who was their common friend. Mr. Dubourg having, in the course of conversation, mentioned some particulars respecting the property of the college over which he presided, and the vacant lots of ground belonging to it, Mrs. Seton remarked, in a jesting way, "I will come and beg." These careless words afterward induced an explanation of her exact position in New York; "and," observes Mrs. Seton, "Mr. Dubourg, interesting himself for us as he does for even the least of God's creatures to whom he may be useful, said decidedly, 'Come to us, Mrs. Seton, we will assist you in forming a plan of life which, while it will forward your views of contributing to the support of your children, will also shelter them from the dangers to which they are exposed among their Protestant connections, and also afford you much more consolation in the exercise of your faith than you have yet enjoyed. We

also wish to form a small school for the promotion of religious instruction for such children whose parents are interested in that point.' You may be sure, I objected only want of talents; to which he replied, 'We want example more than talents.'" It is easy to imagine how delighted Mrs. Seton must have been by this generous invitation from Mr. Dubourg, particularly when he assured her that her two sons would be admitted into St. Mary's College without any expense. Dr. Matignon and Mr. Cheverus were immediately consulted in relation to the project, and they expressed at once their decided approbation of it. The latter, in the name of both, addressed a letter to Mrs. Seton without delay, in which he observed:—"Such an establishment would be a public benefit for religion, and, we hope, a real advantage to yourself and amiable family. We infinitely prefer it to your project of retreat in Montreal." At the same time, Mrs. Seton conferred with some of her friends in New York, who were also of opinion that her removal to Baltimore was an excellent scheme; and she therefore determined to leave her native city, and to seek elsewhere for herself and her family that temporal maintenance and religious security which were not attainable in the home of her childhood. In the arrangement of the plan, which now wholly engrossed the mind of Mr. Dubourg, he suggested the expediency of renting a two-story brick house which had been recently built near St. Mary's Seminary, and was well suited to the object contemplated. He thought that this would be the most prudent step in the beginning, and that the experience of the first year would enable her and her friends to judge more correctly of the proper measures to be taken for the establishment of her institution on a more extensive footing. But the following letter which he wrote to her on the 27th of May, 1808, will show more in detail the character of the

institution which he proposed, and the resources which she had to depend on.

"From your esteemed favor received yesterday, I conclude there is no further obstacle in the way than the ultimate decision of your New York friends as respects the time of your removal. I cannot but approve the delicacy and moderation with which you wish the whole affair to be conducted with every person connected with you. I only say, with Mr. Wilkes, 'the sooner will be the better.' But, to be perfectly explicit, and enable you to be so with your friends, I think I ought to enter into a minute detail of the parts of the plan which I conceive to be the most prudent to pursue in the beginning and in the sequel. I have already stated that I thought it premature to purchase a house. I would rent one for the first year. This space of time would be sufficient to obtain an answer from Italy,* and otherwise to make a trial of our strength and of our prospects. The question about the house would only be whether we should prefer one which is contiguous to our chapel, but hardly large enough to accommodate eight boarders and your own family, to another about two hundred yards distant, in which you could easily lodge twenty, but whose rent would be \$400, instead of \$250, which the former would be. I am inclined to think the smaller house would be sufficient for one year, because I do not feel extremely anxious to see the number of your pupils increased with too great rapidity. The fewer you will have in the beginning, the lighter your task, and the easier it will be to establish that spirit of regularity and piety which must be the main-spring of your machine. There are in the country enough, and perhaps too many, mixed schools, in which ornamental accomplishments are the

* That is, from the Messrs. Filicchi, whose co-operation Mrs. Seton requested, encouraged by their generous friendship.

only objects of education: we have none, that I know, where their acquisition is connected with and made subservient to *pious* instruction; and such a one you certainly wish yours to be. To effect it, my opinion is that none but Catholic girls, or such as would be permitted by their parents to receive a Catholic education, should obtain admittance in it. True it is that, the number of such being small, it would perhaps take several years before the income of the pensions would be equal to the expense. To supply the deficiency we must depend on Providence, which has already given you sufficient encouragement, in the generous offers of your Leghorn friend, to save us the imputation of rashness. If one year's experience persuades us that the establishment is likely to succeed in promoting the grand object of a Catholic and virtuous education, and if it pleases Almighty God to give you, your good Cecilia, and your amiable daughter, a relish for your functions and a resolution to devote yourselves to it, so as to secure permanency to the institution, we will then consult HIM about the means of perpetuating it, by the association of some other pious ladies who may be animated with the same spirit, and submit all our ideas to your worthy friends and protectors. If they approve of them, a lot on our ground will not be wanting, on which we may, *little by little*, erect the buildings which the gradual increase of the institution may render necessary."

Under the guidance of this zealous and enlightened ecclesiastic, Mrs Seton hastened to prepare herself to set out for the field of her future exertions. The day before she left New York, he wrote to her, animating her to enter with zeal and confidence upon the course which she had determined upon: "I remain," says he, "more and more satisfied that, even were you to fail in the attempt you are going to make, it is the will of God you should make it, so great is the number of circumstances concurring in its favor. Among others

I cannot help being struck at the unanimity of all your friends, both worldly and spiritual, in recommending and encouraging it, and particularly at the eagerness with which every member of our community has received the overtures I have made them on the subject. There is not one of my respected brethren* but anticipates the greatest advantages from the meditated institution, and is ready to promote it to the full extent of his powers. Let us then now place our whole confidence in him who chooses thus to make us know his holy will, and be ready to meet with joy every contradiction or ill success which might attend our compliance." After expressing his approbation of Miss Cecilia Seton's accompanying her sister, he continues:—"My sister is eager to lock you in her arms, and to form with you a connection which even death will never dissolve. My little niece has written to her mamma in the effusion of her joy at the approach of a new mamma and a new family of sisters. She shares (and it is not saying little) in all the sentiments of veneration and affectionate regard for you which glow in the breast of your ever devoted friend."

* That is, of St. Mary's Seminary and College at Baltimore.

BOOK V.

Mrs. Seton embarks for Baltimore—Her sentiments during the voyage and on her arrival—Her sons removed to St. Mary's college—Attention received by her—Happiness in her new situation—Letter from Mr. Filicchi—She writes to him—His generosity—Commencement of an academy—Exercises of the school—Rev. Peter Babado—First communion—Miss Harriet Seton—Mrs. Seton's attachment to her and her sisters—Piety of Miss Cecilia Seton—Correspondence between her and Mrs. Seton—Mrs. Seton's first associate—Remarkable coincidence—Project of a work of charity—Mr. Samuel Cooper—Purchase of land near Emmettsburg—Rev. John Dubois—Beginnings of Mt. St. Mary's College—Prediction of Rev. Mr. Chevrons—Mrs. Seton is joined by others—Her humility—Costume and exercises of the sisters—Mrs. Seton binds herself by vow—Name of the society—Further accessions—Miss Cecilia Seton's sickness and voyage to Baltimore—Mother Seton accompanies her to Emmettsburg—Her sister Harriet's conversion.

HAVING completed her arrangements for leaving New York, Mrs. Seton, with her three daughters, embarked for Baltimore in a packet on the 9th of June, 1808. What were the saddening reflections which memory recalled, and the overpowering emotions of her heart, in launching again upon the ocean, it would be difficult to describe. She could not see the shores of her native city receding from her view without drawing the contrast between the circumstances under which she had left it at a former period and her present situation. Then she was beloved and cherished by a numerous family, whose tender regards and warmest sympathies accompanied her to a distant clime; now she was an outcast, at it were, from that society in whose affections she had lived for so many years. She was an exile from the place of her birth; and her departure, instead of being adequately soothed by the kind attentions of her natural friends,

was rather a subject of congratulation for the unrelenting bigotry of many among them. But Mrs. Seton's faith was equal to the fiery ordeal through which she had to pass. On board of the vessel she was kindly treated by all her fellow-travellers, which prompted her to pour forth her heart in gratitude to God, and to make a frequent offering of herself that he might dispose of her according to the designs of his providence. Much of her time during the passage was spent in prayer and acts of resignation to the divine will; and as she drew near the end of her voyage, and thought of the new career she was about to enter upon, in the midst of strangers, she threw herself with an entire confidence into the arms of Providence, burying all care and solicitude in the reflection that she was pursuing the course marked out to her by the will of God. "To-morrow do I go among strangers? No. Has an anxious thought or fear passed my mind? No. Can I be disappointed? No. One sweet sacrifice will reunite my soul with all who offer it. Doubt and fear will fly from the breast inhabited by HIM. There can be no disappointment where the soul's only desire and expectation is to meet his adored will and fulfil it." Such were the fervent sentiments that accompanied Mrs. Seton to her new sphere of labor, and which were not a little enhanced by the religious ceremonial at which she assisted immediately on her arrival in Baltimore. Having reached the wharf late at night on Wednesday, June 15, she did not leave the vessel until the following morning, when a carriage conveyed her and her children to St. Mary's chapel, for the purpose of assisting at the holy sacrifice of mass, for it was the feast of Corpus Christi, and the day on which the beautiful church attached to St. Mary's seminary was dedicated to the service of God. The splendor and solemnity of the ceremony awakened the most lively impressions in Mrs. Seton, whose feelings were almost overpowered by the scene."

After the service she was introduced to a new circle of friends, from whom she met that warm and cordial reception which made her feel perfectly at home.

A few days after her arrival in Baltimore, she went to Georgetown for the purpose of removing her two sons from the college at that place to the institution under the charge of Rev. Mr. Dubourg. Here they were received free of expense, and they enjoyed at the same time the advantage of that maternal vigilance which, when exercised with wisdom, is a considerable help in the training of the youthful heart. Mrs. Seton was a woman of that sterling sense which prevented the proximity of her boys to her own residence from becoming an obstacle in the way of their collegiate duties. Her affection for them could not be surpassed; but it was tempered and governed, in its outward manifestations, by that wise discrimination which knows the injurious effect which parental indulgence too often produces, in counteracting the salutary influence of academical discipline upon the disposition and habits of young persons.

Mrs. Seton's conversion had excited a good deal of attention; but her removal to Baltimore, with a view to conduct a female academy, added to the interest with which she was looked upon by a large class of the community. Many persons of the first respectability called to see her, some perhaps through motives of curiosity, others from higher considerations, to offer the tribute of respect and to welcome her in their midst. Among those who waited on her, Colonel John Eager Howard, former governor of Maryland, and one of the wealthiest citizens of Baltimore,* deserves honorable mention. Mr. Howard paid her a visit, and, entertaining a particular regard for her and her family, with

* Known in the history of the American Revolution as the "Hero of Corpeau."

whom he was acquainted, he offered her a home in his elegant mansion in the suburbs of the city, promising also to educate her sons and daughters as his own. A proposal like this she could not but consider as a noble act of generosity on the part of Mr. Howard, and she duly testified her grateful sense of the kindness; but in thanking him she politely declined accepting it, observing that she had not left the world for the purpose of entering it again. The visits which were paid to Mrs. Seton she would willingly have dispensed with had she consulted only her love of recollection and retirement; but she followed in this the advice of her directors, who thought it better that she should not refuse herself to those who called on her. But she found chiefly among the reverend clergy warm and efficient friends, who looked upon her as an instrument in the hands of God for advancing in a special manner the interests of his holy Church. The venerable Bishop Carroll was delighted to find himself in the midst of her little family circle, and they were equally overjoyed by the paternal kindness which that excellent prelate always manifested toward them.

Although Mrs. Seton was now separated from her relatives and surrounded by persons whose acquaintance she had but recently formed, her situation was so preferable in every respect that she could scarcely believe her own happiness. A comfortable dwelling and well adapted to her purpose, numerous and influential friends, who took the liveliest interest in her welfare, the brightest prospects of success, every heart caressing her, "the look of peace and love on every countenance," and, above all, her close proximity to St. Mary's chapel, which afforded every facility for devotional exercises,—all this, so different from what she had experienced in New York, caused her heart to overflow with joy and thankfulness. Writing to a friend a short time after her change of residence, she says:—"I find the difference of situa-

tion so great that I can scarcely believe it is the same existence. All those little dear attentions of human life which I was entirely weaned from are now my daily portion from the family of Mr. Dubourg, whose sister and mother are unwearied in their care of us. The little necessities which I cannot afford are daily sent to us, as a part of their family, and in every respect my condition is like a new being. The fence of our boundary is the only division from a beautiful chapel, which is open from daylight till nine at night. Our house is very neat, placed between two orchards, and two miles from the city.⁶² My prospects of an establishment I leave to God Almighty."

So great an improvement in the situation of Mrs. Seton was too important an event not to be immediately communicated to her friends at Leghorn. No person on earth was more ready to share her joy or to sympathize in her sorrow than Mr. Anthony Filicchi; and, while she was penning a letter to inform him of the change that had taken place, the following expression of his devoted friendship, in answer to a previous communication from her, was on its way to her from Italy. "You are right, you are but just, in never admitting, (as you declare in your last letter,) among your fears and thoughts, the criminal one of my ever having less interest or affection for my virtuous American sister, my boasted of holy converts. In spite of distance and of the interrupted correspondence of which you complain, you never before were so present in my mind, never so purely deep in my heart as now. As we both grow old, our common end, heaven, must draw us daily nearer each other, till we meet again, and shall shake hands together, to part no more. . . . I rejoice in the good behavior and improvement of your boys and girls. A Christian education will be the best inheritance you can leave to them. . . . My friends, the Murrays, have repeated orders from me to supply whatever

might be wanting in others. You must call on them as regularly as agreed on between us, and as often as you may be in want. If you attempt to disregard your brother's direction in this respect, I will not write you any more. I will try not to think of you, if possible. My means are to-day double of what they were at the date of my subscription.* In the universal stagnation of trade, fortunate speculations have largely made up for the loss of our usual consignments from the United States. A special Providence is visible in every step of ours. If you are heard so much in heaven in my behalf, should I be so ungrateful as to desert you on earth? It is mortifying indeed to receive, but mortification is the duty of a Christian."

To a friend who felt so lively an interest in her happiness, the intelligence of her removal to Baltimore could not fail to be most welcome. In apprising him of it she was aware that the undertaking she was about to commence might at a later period demand considerable expense, and prudence required that she should not venture too far without knowing on what resources she might confidently depend. She, therefore, wrote to Mr. Anthony Filicchi, to consult him in a matter which was in some degree to be committed to the generous disposition which he had already manifested toward her; and it will be seen that in doing this she only anticipated the magnanimous proposals of the letter which we have just cited. After informing him of the circumstances which more immediately led to her removal from New York, and that through the benevolence of him and other friends she had been enabled to bring one thousand dollars with her to Baltimore, she adds:—"Here we are under the sheltering wing of beings who live only to promote the glory of God and to help the friendless and

* That is, the annual contribution of \$400 toward her support, which began in 1806.

distressed. I removed my boys from Georgetown immediately, and Mr. Dubourg has received them in the college, free of all expense to me, and I may make use of your generous allowance to assist our maintenance. As our plan does not admit of taking any but boarders, and those Catholics, it cannot be forwarded with that speed which attends an institution founded on worldly views. Yet there is every hope that it will gradually succeed, as it is committed solely to the providence of Almighty God. Should I, my dear Antonio, enter into a detail of the effects of the unexpected, and to me immense, happiness of living in such society as here surrounds us,—every soul breathing only divine charity, the sweet company and friendship of one of the most amiable women in the world, the sister of Rev. Mr. Dubourg, who suffers me also to call her sister,—a chapel the most elegant in America, and very little inferior to some in Florence, so near my dwelling that I can hear the bell at the altar,—oh, Filicchi! you who know so well how to pity your sister will gladly receive the account of this happy reverse. The gentlemen of the seminary have offered to give me a lot of ground to build on. It is proposed (supposing such an object could be accomplished) to begin on a small plan, admitting of enlargement if necessary, in the hope and expectation that there will not be wanting ladies to join in forming a permanent institution. But what can a creature so poor in resources do? I must trust all to Divine Providence. . . . With that frankness I owe to you, from whom no thought of my mind should be concealed, I dare to ask my brother how far and to what sum I may look up to yourself and honored brother in this position of things? What you have done is so unmerited by the receiver, what you continually are doing for us is so much more than could in any way be expected, that I force myself to ask this question, which is, however, necessary to the regularity of my proceed-

ings and the respect due to these reverend gentlemen who interest themselves so earnestly in our regard. At all events, whatever may be the result of this letter on your dear heart, let it not be a moment checked in the sentiment which is my greatest happiness in this world. Write, I conjure you, Antonio; if you think your poor little sister even wrong, at least pity her, and love her forever as she does you."

In thus appealing to the munificent friendship of Mr. Filicchi, Mrs. Seton felt on the one hand that fear, which was the natural suggestion of prudence, that she might be presuming too much upon his aid, while on the other she was encouraged, by his noble and repeated offers, to trust largely in his assistance. Although his beneficiary, she was induced by his generous manner to waive all delicacy in accepting and even in soliciting his kindness. He found so much pleasure in supplying her wants, he urged her so emphatically to draw upon his means, he reminded her so constantly that he considered her in a great measure the occasion of his increased prosperity in this world, that he made the acceptance of his generosity appear as much in the light of a favor conferred upon him as a service rendered to others. All this he had manifested in his previous letters; and his answer to Mrs. Seton's last communication was equally significant of his sterling and practical friendship. "I am extremely pleased," he says, "in seeing you out of New York, among true Christians, surrounded by all your children, and under the holy tuition of such worthy persons as those you mention. To promote the establishment you intimate, so much approved of by my Chervus and Matignon, you will please to draw on our friends, J. Murray & Sons, of New York, for one thousand dollars, charging the same to the account in the world to come of my brother Philip and of your brother Antonio. If something more should be wanted, you are commanded to quote

It to me plainly and positively. Your prayers have so much bettered our mercantile importance here below, that, in spite of all the embargoes, political and commercial troubles which have caused and will cause the utter ruin of many, we possess greater means now than before, thanks to God, with the same unalterable good-will."

Although Mrs. Seton did not receive this additional testimony of Mr. Filicchi's friendship for many months after she had written to him, she was well assured, by his uniform kindness, that in case of need his co-operation in her undertaking would be cheerfully and efficiently bestowed. Encouraged also by all around her, she opened her boarding-school for young ladies about the beginning of September, and easily obtained the limited number of pupils that she proposed to educate. The main object of her institution being to impart a solid religious instruction and form the youthful heart to the love and practice of virtue, only the children of Catholic parents were admitted. Besides morning and evening prayer, they assisted regularly at the holy sacrifice of the mass and the recitation of the rosary. The remainder of the time was devoted to the usual branches of female education, as reading, writing, arithmetic, plain and fancy needlework, and the English and French languages. The study of the Christian doctrine, however, was the principal object of their attention, which Mrs. Seton endeavored to impress deeply upon their minds.

Though the institution which she had opened implied on her part no obligations arising from a special consecration of herself to God, yet she looked forward to the moment when such a vocation would be manifested by Divine Providence; and she regulated her actions as if she had already commenced a life of religious seclusion, living retired from the world, and applying herself only to the duties of her charge and what would tend directly to the advance-

ment of her spiritual welfare. Hence, she paid no visits but those which business or charity required. In retirement from the world she found a blessed peace, for she thereby escaped the distractions of secular life, and was enabled more easily to commune with God in the meditation of heavenly things; or, as she herself expresses it, she was "in the secret of God's tabernacle, where alone safety was to be found, with true liberty and sweet content." Her visits to the Blessed Sacrament were frequent, and she approached the holy communion every day, unless some particular circumstance prevented it. In this constant attention to holy things she found her greatest happiness, setting to profit the means of sanctification which she enjoyed, and prizing them above all worldly advantages. We may judge of her recollection, fervor, and interior joy, from the language which she employed in alluding to her spiritual privileges:—"Every morning at communion, living in the very wounds of our dearest Lord, seeing only his representatives, and receiving their benediction continually."

Besides the scholastic exercises mentioned above, it was usual to read to the pupils every Friday the narrative of our Saviour's passion, to inflame their hearts with a becoming sense of gratitude and love for their divine Redeemer. The religious instruction of the scholars was confided to the Rev. Peter Babade, of the society of St. Sulpitius, and a professor at St. Mary's College. Soon after Mrs. Seton formed his acquaintance, she discovered in him a spirit congenial to her own—a man of vivid fancy and ardent temperament, with a frankness and suavity of manner which won her entire confidence and led her to select him for the direction of her conscience. Mr. Babade frequently visited the school, and was the spiritual father and protector of the little family of which Mrs. Seton was the head. In the spring of 1809 he prepared some of the children for the sac-

portant duty of first communion which took place at the close of a spiritual retreat. On this occasion Mrs. Seton was transported with the beauty and holiness of the scene around her. The solemnity of the season,—it being the paschal time,—the impressive services of the Church, and youthful innocence sealing its consecration to our Lord by an ineffable union with him in the sacrament of his love, all contributed to enliven her faith and inflame her soul with the most ardent devotion. Writing to a sister-in-law at this time, she thus alludes to the spiritual delights which she enjoyed:—"O Cecil, Cecil, this heavenly day, and the heavenly week that is past—every hour of the week filled with sacred sorrow! and this day imagine six of us, the girls all in white, as modest as angels, receiving from the hands of our blessed father Babado our adored Lord. He had been all the week preparing them, and every night our little chapel has resounded with love and adoration. This morning, in the subterraneous chapel of the Blessed Virgin, in the very depth of solitude, on the tomb of our Lord,* he celebrated the adorable sacrifice and dispensed the Sacred Pasover. His tears fell fast over his precious hands while he gave it, and we had liberty to sob aloud, unwitnessed by any, as no one had an idea of our going there. What a scene! Could you but have shared it! Immediately after, the dear Mr. Dubourg came down, and said the mass of thanksgiving, served by our father Babade, whose gray hairs looked more venerable than can be expressed. Every night we have *Benediction*. Imagine twenty priests, all with the devotion of saints, clothed in white, accompanied by the whole troop of the young seminarians in surplices also, all in order, surrounding the Blessed Sacrament ex-

* An altar, with an opening in front, containing a representation of our Saviour in a state of death.

posed, singing the hymn of the resurrection. When they come to the words, 'Peace be to all here,' it seems as if our Lord is again acting over the scene that passed with the assembled disciples."

This happiness which Mrs. Seton experienced was a source of great satisfaction to the few cherished friends whom she had left on removing to Baltimore,—but particularly to her sisters-in-law, whom we have already mentioned as sympathizing warmly in her trials and remaining steadfast in their affection despite the frowns of her adversaries. Those true and faithful relatives, although pained by the separation which deprived them of her valued society, rejoiced for her sake that she had found, at a distance from her native place, increased happiness for herself and her children. Miss Harriet Seton wrote to her immediately after her departure from New York in the most affectionate strain. After expressing the intensity of her suffering by the loss she had sustained, she adds:—"But why should I have but one pang? When I can already view you in the bosom of happiness, can fancy I see your dear countenance brighten with joy when pressing to your breast your sweet little boys, for a moment I can almost cease to regret your absence; but, when reflecting that that absence, in all human probability, may be an eternal one, I shudder. I am resolved to think so no more: it cannot be. He is too good and generous to permit a separation between those who love him so tenderly: by some means or other he will surely unite us. I will cling to that dear hope with confidence. It will support me under every trial, be the soother of every pain." These words, though not prophetic, were predictive of truth. Every thing seemed to oppose the prospect of her ever being united with Mrs. Seton in this life; and, surrounded as she was by the gay and fashionable society of New York, greatly admired for her personal charms, and

closely watched by her family on account of her known preference for the Catholic religion, she feared that these obstacles might prove the cause of an eternal separation from her whom she so much loved. In addition to this, she had plodged her heart and hand to a step-brother of Mrs. Seton, who was not a Catholic,—a circumstance which would only have increased the difficulties to be encountered in the event of her determination to embrace the true faith. Yet she hoped as it were against hope; and, when she heard of the happiness enjoyed by her relative in Baltimore, she was prompted both by affection and a spirit of religion to sigh for a reunion. Alluding to the account Mrs. Seton had given of the friendship she met with in her new situation, she says, "Where is it, my beloved sister, you could go without meeting with kindness and affection? They must indeed be insensible beings who know you without loving you. Your description is delightful. Every thought, every hope, flies toward the happy spot you have pictured. Oh that I may one day be there, but not in my present state, to be happy! Let me enjoy the precious privilege of serving God in your blessed faith. What comfort can I have in my own, when I know there is a better? Dearest sister, pray for me always; never forget me when in the chapel. Recollect, at sunset, I shall always meet you at the foot of the cross in the *Miserere*. What a sweet remembrance!" These aspirations of her soul, as we shall see in the sequel, were all realized by the merciful dispensations of Providence, in defiance of the obstacles which in the natural course of things seemed to render it impracticable. In the mean time she found alleviation of her pain in corresponding with Mrs. Seton, and in the society of her sister Cecilia, who, as we have seen, had so heroically, at the age of fifteen, triumphed over every opposition to her union with the Catholic Church. She thus speaks of her in a letter to her

sister-in-law in Baltimore. "November 20, 1808.—At last I am here, close by my Cecil's elbow,—a situation that monarchs might envy. It is here alone that my poor heart feels some little cessation from pain and sorrow. What anguish the most acute could not be hushed in her dear society! Her presence actually works a charm upon my mind. I almost forget that pain ever found a place in my bosom. Oh, my dearest sister, if it was so that I could be permitted to remain, how sweetly we should pass the winter, thinking, speaking, writing to you! The world should be forgot, with all its various vanities, and we should lose ourselves in thoughts of heaven and you. It is too much to think of. What pleasure, what happiness, could be equal to it? None that could give my heart more real satisfaction. You know I have been closely allied to little misery for those four or five years past, and need some consolation to keep me from going to wreck. Such being the case, surely my darling will not refuse an innocent request from one who loves her with affection that no language can describe; it is to let me share a portion of your thoughts the 27th of December. It must ever be a day of bitter agony to you; yes, to us all;* but, as it was the will of our dear Lord, we must bow submissive and kiss the rod. Will you, can you, my sister, call to remembrance that on that day your Harriet was ushered into existence, not to repose upon a bed of roses, but of thorns, and for many years back has been accustomed to share your tenderest thoughts and receive some rules of conduct for the new year, some little affectionate letter of advice and comfort blended? I now stand more in need of this than ever, and shall sigh for the arrival of that day that brings me if only one line to say that I was remembered at the foot of the cross."

* The anniversary of the day on which her brother, Mrs. Seton's husband, died.

Mrs. Seton, on her part, entertained the warmest affection for her sisters in New York, and felt the deepest solicitude for their welfare, especially for the three who still remained in the Protestant communion. They were always in her thoughts, and were daily commended to God in her prayers. "In my dear, sacred communions," she says, "which are almost every day, often my soul cries out so much for you all that it seems impossible to express the desire in any words, but a deluge of tears is the only relief." On another occasion, alluding to two of these cherished souls, she says, "They little know what my soul endures for them. Sweet, precious beings! gladly, joyfully, would their own sister give the last drop of her blood for them!"

But, knowing well how sensibly her absence was felt by Miss Cecilia Seton, the generous little convert to Catholicity, Mrs. Seton ardently desired and prayed that the Almighty would permit her to join her in Baltimore. This young but eminently pious Christian had always found in Mrs. Seton a beloved companion, a counsellor in her difficulties, and a consoler in the hour of trial; and she could not but suffer intensely by a separation from so loved and valued a friend. Nothing, however, could abate her fervor in the practice of religion. Although left alone among her Protestant relatives, she persevered with constancy in the faithful performance of her duties. Her actions were all regulated by a rule having the approbation of her director; and, though its observance was not always perfectly agreeable to human nature, obedience made it "sweet and easy," supporting her continually with the thought that she was accomplishing the will of Heaven. In the frequentation of the sacraments she found her "greatest earthly happiness," and her soul overflowed with consolation at the thought of the blessings imparted in the holy communion. It gave her unspeakable pleasure to hear from her sister in Baltimore; but she did not too easily

yield to the impulse of natural affection; to purify her intention she would sometimes before opening her letters offer her heart to God or make an act of resignation. Having chosen a heavenly spouse to whom she had consecrated all her affections, she firmly resisted the allurements of the world when it sought to withdraw her from that holy life which she had embraced. Entirely dependent on the care of an affectionate brother, who was a Protestant, Miss Seton was at times under the necessity of enduring with patience what otherwise her piety would have invincibly opposed. On one occasion, she was compelled by her brother to assist at a theatrical exhibition, which she did with the utmost reluctance and unwillingness, and only for the sake of escaping a greater evil. But, though present in body, her mind was far from mingling in the excitement of the drama. To prevent her eyes from falling upon those objects which others have so much curiosity to see, she placed her little niece on her lap before her, and, instead of paying any attention to what was passing around, she spent the time in the recitation of the rosary.

The Catholicity of Miss Cecilia Seton rendered her situation any thing but agreeable among her Protestant relatives. Some of them treated her with the utmost kindness, while from others she met with "angry words and cross looks," as she herself expresses it. Her religion was abused in her presence, its "abominations" descanted upon, and, between those who wished her out of New York and others who held her back, she knew no alternative but to suffer in silence for the love of God. "I would go anywhere else," she says, "and be the meanest servant. . . . Was there not an all-wise Creator to direct, and a Jesus to recompense for our pains, I know not what I should think of my situation." In those trials she was strengthened and consoled by the reflection that she was suffering persecution

for justice' sake, for that Divine Master whose grace would enable her to bear it. "How sweet is it to feel that we suffer with and for Jesus! My soul truly rejoices. The cup is at first bitter, but in it there is an unknown delight for those that truly love. Dear, dearest sister, if I was with you I should not have those sighs, those tears, those many offerings to make. I fear my scales would be very light." In transmitting an account of her situation to Mrs. Seton, she recommended herself to her prayers, expressing the firm conviction that God would in his own good time deliver her from this conflict. The answer which she received will show that she could not have unbosomed her feelings to one who would be a better support to her amid the contradictions which she suffered.

"Yes, my Cecilia, favored of heaven, associate of angels, beloved child of Jesus, you shall have the victory, and HE the glory. To him be glory forever who has called you to so glorious a combat and so tenderly supports you through it. You will triumph, for it is Jesus who fights, not you, my dear one. Oh, no! young and timid, weak and irresolute, the lamb could not stem the torrent nor stand the beating storm: but the tender shepherd takes it on his shoulder, casts his cloak about it, and the happy trembler finds itself at home before it knew its journey was half finished. And so, my dear one, it will be with you. He will not leave you one moment, nor suffer the least harm to approach you; not one tear shall fall to the ground nor one sigh of love be lost. Happy, happy child! and if you are not removed to the sheltering fold that awaits you, he will make you one in his own bosom until your task is done. Happy, happy child! how sweet must be your converse with that Divine Spirit which puts in your heart, yet so inexperienced, so untutored, the science of the Saints! How must those blessed beings rejoice over you, while walking

so steadfastly in their paths and their sufferings! It is poor sister who must beg you to pray for her. I am at rest, my darling, while you are mounting the heights of Sion. Often, too, I sleep in the garden while you are sharing the bitter cup: but it is not to be so long; his mercies are endless, and I shall not be left without my portion. Pray for me that it may not come from within: that, and that alone, is real anguish. As it is, I am daily and hourly receiving the most precious consolations, not with the enthusiastic delight you know I once experienced, but gently, gratefully offering to resign them in the very moment of enjoyment. Your letter will be food for thanksgiving and joy in our dear Lord beyond all human calculations. I would willingly go through any bodily suffering to receive such a feast for the soul. What shall I say in this case? God alone is sufficient. Our blessed Padre* has wept with joy at reading your letter; I have also consulted Mr. Dubourg, and all agree that it is a case which the hand of man must deem sacred and consign to God alone; but not without the assurance that all our prayers are and shall be united for your most precious soul's support and consolation. . . . My darling child, may you be soon released if it is his blessed will! but the sacrifice must be consummated, and sister's soul prays for you unceasingly, nor is it unaided by prayers of much more worth. How many holy souls are perpetually united for that end! . . . A thousand blessings be with you." August 8, 1808.

To be associated with her sister, enjoying every facility for the entire dedication of herself to God, would have completed the happiness of Miss Seton. But even in this she strove to conform herself to the divine will. When she was apprised of Mrs. Seton's arrival in Baltimore and the cheering prospect before her, the tears gushed from her eyes; but,

* Rev. Mr. Babada.

as she remarks herself, they were not tears of regret or impatience to be with her, but of a soul wholly resigned to her God, desiring only his will, and even feeling happy at being permitted to make so great a sacrifice. On the other hand, every day and every hour she became more and more disgusted with the world and all that belongs to it, and her thoughts involuntarily turned upon the happiness of being with her sister. "I feel my situation," she says, "daily more painful. It is God only that can know all. It seems to me he will not let it remain long so. I am hourly in fear of splitting on the many quicksands and rocks which surround me. Oh, sister, when shall I be delivered from them? And when I think of being with you it's like thinking of paradise."

Such were the elevated motives that prompted her desire of retiring from the world. She had in view only the glory of God and her own sanctification; looking upon a state of religious seclusion not as a life of ease and pleasure, but one of penance and humiliation.

To ascertain the divine will in her regard, she prayed frequently and with fervor to the Father of lights, offered her communions for this purpose, and made known to her spiritual guide all the circumstances of her situation and the dispositions of her soul. At length, in the spring of 1809, he expressed the opinion that the Almighty called her to a state of religious seclusion, and directed her to place her trust in him until he would appoint the moment for the accomplishment of her wishes.

When Mrs. Seton commenced her institution in Baltimore, she had no certain prospect of forming a society whose members would be specially consecrated to the service of God. Such an undertaking was to depend on circumstances which could only be developed in the course of time. In the autumn of 1808 the designs of Providence began to

manifest themselves more particularly in her regard. The Rev. Mr. Babado, being on a missionary excursion at Philadelphia, became acquainted with a young lady (Miss Cecilia O'Conway) who was desirous of seeking a refuge from the distractions of the world, and for this purpose was preparing to cross the Atlantic. Having informed her of Mrs. Seton's intentions, she was induced to change her plans and remain in America. Her father accompanied her to Baltimore, and offered her to Mrs. Seton as a child whom he consecrated to God. On the 7th of December, Miss O'Conway became her first companion, and assisted in the school then under her charge. In this manifestation of Divine Providence Mr. Babado thought that he discerned the commencement of an undertaking which would gradually collect round Mrs. Seton a numerous band of spiritual daughters, and he applied to her, requesting her at the same time to repeat continually those words of the 112th psalm, "Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in a house, the joyful mother of children."

About this time another circumstance took place which still more plainly indicated the will of God in reference to the good work. Mr. Cooper, who was then a student in St. Mary's Seminary, at Baltimore, intending, if such were the divine will, to prepare himself for the sacred ministry, possessed some property; and he was desirous of literally following the maxim of the gospel:—"Go, sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and come, follow me." One morning, immediately after receiving the holy communion, Mrs. Seton felt a strong inclination arise within her to dedicate herself to the care and instruction of poor female children, and to organize some plan for this purpose that might be continued even after her death. She communicated this to the Rev. Mr. Dubourg: "This morning," she said, "in my dear communion, I thought, 'Dearest Saviour, if you would but give me the care of poor little children, no matter how poor;'

and, Mr. Cooper being directly before me at his thanksgiving, I thought, 'He has money:—if he would but give it for the bringing up of poor little children, to know and love you!'" Mr. Dubourg, joining his hands, observed that it was very strange; for Mrs. Seton had not mentioned the subject to any one else. "Mr. Cooper," said he, "spoke to me this very morning of his thoughts being all for poor children's instruction, and if he had somebody to do it he would give his money for that purpose; and he wondered if Mrs. Seton would be willing to undertake it." The good priest was struck at the coincidence of their views, and he requested them each to reflect upon the subject for the space of a month, and then to acquaint him with the result. During this time there was no interchange of opinion between Mrs. Seton and Mr. Cooper in relation to their wishes; and at the expiration of it they both returned separately to Mr. Dubourg, renewing the sentiments they had expressed before, one offering a portion of his temporal means* and the other her devoted service for the relief of the poor and suffering members of Christ. The providence of God in behalf of the American Church was so clearly indicated in the circumstances just related that little room was left for deliberation. Bishop Carroll, having been informed of the design, gave his warmest approbation to it, in conjunction with the Rev. Francis Nagot, the saintly superior of St. Mary's Seminary; and the only question that now presented itself for consideration was in reference to the locality of the intended establishment. Mr. Dubourg, who was the prime mover in the undertaking, was anxious to have the institution in the city of Baltimore or its vicinity. But Mr. Cooper gently insisted upon the selection of Emmetsburg as a more convenient situation; and the good priest, taking his words as pro-

* Eight thousand dollars.

phetic, replied, "Be it Emmetsburg." Mr. Cooper's preference for this situation was no doubt founded upon the physical and moral advantages which it offered for a religious community. Far from the bustle and dissipation of the city, remarkable for a pure and healthy atmosphere, and surrounded by the wild grandeur of its mountain scenery, it presented peculiar attractions for a conventual establishment.

The munificent aid contributed by Mr. Cooper toward the proposed institution justly entitles him to be considered one of its principal benefactors. He, like Mrs. Seton, had been called from the highway of error into the fold of Catholic truth. Born in Virginia, in the very heart of Protestantism, he engaged in maritime pursuits, and visited different parts of the globe. Falling dangerously sick at Paris, he felt himself urged to read the Holy Scriptures, with which he had not yet been acquainted. This reading greatly interested him, and caused him to reflect seriously upon the unhappy consequences of being unconcerned about the future. The New Testament particularly made a deep impression upon his mind, and to it he mainly attributed his conversion. While he read of the ineffable goodness of the Son of God, he burned with love for him without yet knowing him, and he ardently desired to have a friend like Him whose history he had perused. One day he heard, or thought that he heard, a voice saying to him, "If you wish me to be your friend, it depends only upon yourself." Some time after, while at London, always occupied with the same thought and engaged in reading the New Testament, in which he continually discovered new beauties, he heard the same voice addressing him a second time; but it did not indicate to him the way of acquiring the happiness to which he aspired. He therefore opened his thoughts and feelings to a Protestant friend, who advised him to examine the claims of the different Christian denominations, with the

view of embracing that which would appear to him the best founded in truth. Accordingly, he provided himself with the doctrinal books of the various sects in England, and returned to the United States, resolved to enter seriously upon the investigation of the subject. A Catholic lady completed his sources of information by giving him a work that treated of the orthodox faith.* In the course of his inquiries he also consulted Bishop White, of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania, and other clergymen of note, especially to satisfy his mind in regard to the reasons that had led to the separation from the Catholic Church in the 16th century. The result of this examination was the conviction that the reformation, so called, was altogether indefensible; and in the autumn of 1807, during the visitation of Bishop Carroll at Philadelphia, he became a member of the true Church. Mr. Cooper being a man of fortune, and having mingled in fashionable life, his conversion produced a great sensation in that city. Soon after this happy event he was moved by the grace of God to embrace the ecclesiastical state, and he entered the seminary at Baltimore in September, 1808, where he formed the acquaintance of Mrs. Seton and became a co-operator in the charitable work which she now contemplated.

The vicinity of Emmettsburg having been selected for the location of the sisterhood projected by Mrs. Seton, Mr. Dubourg turned his attention to the purchase of an eligible site; and, on a visit to that part of the country shortly after, he bought the land now held by the Daughters of Charity, about half a mile south of the village. At that time the only tenement on the farm was a very small stone building, forming about one-half of what is now used as the wash-house of the institution. The property was settled in the joint

* *Anti de la Religion*, December, 1843.

tenantship of the Rev. Wm. V. Dubourg, Rev. John Dubois, and Samuel Cooper. The Rev. Mr. Dubois was at that time located near Emmettsburg, being pastor of several congregations in Frederick county and principal of a school which he had recently established. His important connection with the future history of Mrs. Seton requires that we should introduce him more fully to the reader.

Born in Paris on the 24th of August, 1764, he was remarkable from his early years for those qualities which distinguished him in after life,—piety, energy, and perseverance. Having finished his scholastic course with great honor to himself, he embraced the ecclesiastical state, and was devoted to the priesthood in the year 1787. He officiated in Paris until the outbreak of the revolution, when, like many others of his brethren, he was forced to seek an asylum in a foreign land. Having arrived at Norfolk, Va., in July, 1791, he obtained from Bishop Carroll the necessary faculties for officiating at that place and at Richmond. Furnished with commendatory letters from General Lafayette, he formed the acquaintance of many distinguished men of the times in this country, among whom were James Monroe and Patrick Henry, to the latter of whom he was indebted for occasional lessons in the English language. The kindest attentions were paid to him by these and other illustrious individuals; and it was undoubtedly owing to their intervention that he was permitted to offer up the holy sacrifice in the capital of Virginia, where but a short time before a Catholic priest had been compelled, in visiting his flock, to disguise himself for the protection of his person and life. When he had acquired some knowledge of the English tongue, Mr. Dubois was appointed by Bishop Carroll to the charge of the congregations of which Fredericktown, in Maryland, was the central point; and from the year 1794 to 1808 he was continually employed in passing from one station to another, preaching, adminis-

tering the sacraments, and instructing the young. By his exertions the first Catholic church at Frederick was erected, and from this place he visited once a month, and alternately, the church in the village of Emmettsburg and a chapel at the base of the mountain, about two miles from the town. At this period the country around wore but slight traces of cultivation; the wildness of the forest was visible on every side. In November, 1806, the two congregations above mentioned assembled on the brow of the hill, cleared a sufficient space for the site of a house, and, having hewn logs for the purpose, they erected a small one-story residence, containing two rooms.* In the following spring they commenced the building of a brick church higher up the mountain, which was completed in 1807.† Mr. Dubois soon after took possession of the log-house, and, together with the pastoral duties which he performed, commenced a school for the instruction of youth in knowledge and piety. This school was originally held in a small brick house at some distance from the mountain, but was soon removed to a more commodious log tenement on the rise of the hill.⁽¹⁾ Mr. Dubois having in 1809 become a member of the society of St. Sulpitius, to his care were transferred the pupils of the preparatory seminary, near Abbotstown, Pennsylvania, the object of which was to form professors for St. Mary's College and students for the seminary at Baltimore.⁽²⁾ In the spring of that year sixteen youths were conveyed from the institution in Pennsylvania to the establishment near Emmettsburg, which was now designed as an ecclesiastical school and an appendage of that in Baltimore. But the salubrity of its situation, the pure and delightful water that abounded on the spot, and above all its remoteness from the vices and distractions of a

* Known afterward as Mr. Duhamel's house.

† The present church on the mountain, but since enlarged and improved.

city, induced many parents to solicit admission for their children, though not aspirants to the priesthood; and their request was granted the more readily as, besides forming many young persons to virtue and science, it afforded useful employment to ecclesiastical students, who, in pursuing higher studies, could devote a part of their time to the teaching of inferior classes. By this arrangement also they, as well as the institution, were relieved from the expense of their education, and the house was supplied with a body of competent instructors. The undertaking succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations of its zealous and holy founder. Such was the beginning of Mount St. Mary's College, which has become so fruitful a nursery of science and religion, and rendered such important services to society and to the American Church. From this period its history will be found closely interwoven with that of Mrs. Seton and the community under her charge.

While the preliminaries of her undertaking were in progress, Almighty God was disposing the hearts of many to co-operate in the good work, and language almost prophetic was addressed to her in reference to its successful accomplishment. Rev. Mr. Cheverus no sooner heard of the proposed institution than he wrote to Mrs. Seton in the following words, dated April 18, 1800:—"How admirable in Divine Providence! I see already numerous choirs of virgins following you to the altar. I see your holy order diffusing itself in the different parts of the United States, spreading everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ, and teaching by their angelical lives and pious instructions how to serve God in purity and holiness. I have no doubt, my beloved and venerable sister, that He who has begun this work will bring it to perfection." Of this result Mrs. Seton had the fullest confidence, for every thing indicated the blessing of God upon the undertaking, and daily events

seemed most happily to concur in bringing it to maturity. She was now hailed far and near as the mother of a new and spiritual family, whose proudest distinction would be to wear the badge of Christian perfection; and her heart expanded with joy at the anticipation of the blessings which they were chosen to dispense. "The scene before me," she says, "is heavenly; I can give you no just idea of the precious souls who are daily uniting under my banner, which is the cross of Christ. The tender title of mother salutes me everywhere, even from lips that have never said to me the common salutation among strangers."

The second lady who offered herself as a candidate for the new sisterhood was a Miss Maria Murphy of Philadelphia, remarkable for her gentle and amiable disposition. She left the house of her mother without her consent, in obedience to what she deemed to be the will of God for the sanctification of her soul, having previously ceded the little property she possessed to her relatives. Mrs. Seton endeavored to prevail upon her to return to her family, but her tears and prayers were victorious, and she remained with the full approbation of her parents. She arrived in Baltimore some time in the month of April, 1800. In May of the same year two others hailed Mrs. Seton as their spiritual mother,—Miss Mary Ann Butler of Philadelphia, and Miss Susan Clossy of New York, the former only a few days before the latter. Several ladies in Baltimore were also preparing themselves at this time to join the community, while others in the vicinity of Emmettsburg looked forward with delight to the blessings which they hoped to enjoy under the spiritual guidance of Mrs. Seton. The following letter to her, from one of these postulants, will show the lively joy awakened by the expectation of her coming, as well as the piety and zeal which formed the elements of the new undertaking. "Oh, my reverend mother! I cannot tell you what an effect

that sweet letter had on me. It seems to me it has enkindled in my breast flames which I hope with the grace of God will never be extinguished. . . . My ghostly father desired me to offer up my communion, not only for you according to your desire, but to obtain of our dear Lord an increase of the sentiments which he has been pleased to inspire me with, through you, his servant. I also implored that day the intercession of the Virgin Mary, that she would vouchsafe to beg for me of her blessed Son our Lord all the requisite dispositions which I hope will fit me for the happy life which I sue for. You asked me, dear mother, if I did not wish to see the sisters. I do. But is it not a weakness in me? I am afraid I seek for some consolation, and I know I ought not. Oh, when shall I be indifferent about any thing, even spiritual comforts? This I must learn at your school: for you must know I am but a child: I only begin to crawl in the ways of God; and that interior spirit which detaches us from every thing that is not God, and makes the true spouse of Christ, I have yet to acquire. I stand sometimes on the top of our dear Mount St. Mary's, whence I can see the happy spot that is to receive you and my sisters and myself, and I can hardly contain my joy." May 2, 1800.

Mother Seton, as we shall hereafter call her, possessed in an eminent degree that fervor which she communicated to others; but the sentiment of her own unworthiness predominated in her heart. She looked upon herself as altogether unsuited to the task of forming souls to the practice of the Christian virtues; and on the evening of the day that it was assigned to her by the bishop and clergy, her spiritual advisors, she was seized with a transport of mingled love and humility, in reflecting upon the subject. Being with two or three of her sisters, and the discourse turning upon the probable designs of Providence in their regard, Mother Seton became so penetrated with the awful responsibility,

and sense of her own incapacity, that she was almost insupportable. For some moments she wept bitterly in silence; then, throwing herself upon her knees, she confessed aloud the most frail and humiliating actions of her life from her childhood upward; after which she exclaimed, in the most affecting manner, her hands and eyes raised toward heaven and the tears gushing down her cheeks, "My gracious God! You know my unfitness for this task. I who by my sins have so often crucified you, I blush with shame and confusion. How can I teach others, who know so little myself, and am so miserable and imperfect?" The sisters who were present were overwhelmed by the scene before them, and, falling on their knees, gave vent to their tears and painful emotions.

Mother Seton having now received four candidates into her house, it was the opinion of Mr. Dubourg that the time had arrived for their assuming, as far as practicable, the form of a religious community. She therefore proposed to the sisters to appear in a habit like that which she wore herself, and which consisted of a black dress with a short cape, similar to a costume that she had observed among the religious of Italy. Her head-dress was a neat white muslin cap, with a crimped border, and a black crape band around the head, fastened under the chin.* This costume they assumed on the 1st of June, 1809, and the next day—feast of Corpus Christi—they appeared at the public service in St. Mary's Chapel for the first time in their conventual habit, receiving the divine sacrament of the altar as the seal of their consecration to God, and gladdening the hearts of all who witnessed this edifying scene, so full of promise to the Church. Mr. Dubourg, in particular, was in raptures at the spectacle presented by this little band of devoted sisters, which had

* Mrs. Seton had worn this dress since the death of her husband.

been formed under his wise superintendence and was to be the germ of so much good to religion and society.⁽¹³⁾

Mother Seton herself, with a soul glowing with charity and delight, organized her community by the adoption of such rules as circumstances permitted. Regular hours were appointed for the daily actions and duties of the sisters, who were employed partly in attending to the domestic concerns and partly in conducting the exercises of the school. Stated days were fixed for the reception of the holy communion, and the sisters were exhorted to practise the mortification of the tongue and other senses, and to apply to certain studies for the purpose of qualifying themselves for fulfilling the future designs of Providence. No particular religious institute had yet been adopted for the final organization of the society, but it was deemed expedient that Mother Seton should bind herself, at least for a time, by some special act of consecration, to the holy life she had embraced; and for this reason she made a vow privately, in the presence of Bishop Carroll, obligating her for the space of one year to the practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience. With what sentiments she assumed this additional obligation may be best gathered from the language in which she herself alludes to it. The object of it, she says, was to embrace poverty, in whose arms she desired to live and die, and from which, indeed, she had no means of escape; to promise a chastity so dear and lovely that she esteemed it her true delight to cherish it; and, above all, to bind herself to obedience, the true protection and safeguard of her soul. To give to the new community all the care and support which the success of such an institution demands, the Rev. Mr. Dubourg was appointed its ecclesiastical superior, whatever form it might subsequently take. Various names were suggested for the designation of the society; but this point could not be well determined until the adoption of a permanent rule which

would give a fixed character to the institute. However, at the request of Mother Seton, it was agreed that the members of the community should be called "Sisters of St. Joseph;" for it was the dictate of her piety to place herself and society, sisters and children, under the protecting care of St. Joseph, the faithful guardian of the Son of God on earth.

Shortly after the adoption of the conventual habit, the sisterhood had an accession of two members from the city of Baltimore,—Mrs. Rose White, a widow lady, and Miss Catharine Mullen. Divine Providence at the same time was wafting to this abode of Christian piety another soul, whose highest ambition had long been the total consecration of herself to God, under the maternal guidance of Mother Seton. This was Miss Cecilia Seton, her sister-in-law. As we have stated, her spiritual directors had finally decided that she was called to religious seclusion; but circumstances seemed to forbid the immediate execution of her wishes. The Almighty, however, listening to the fond aspirations of her heart, which looked only to his greater glory, accomplished in her behalf what human calculations could not achieve. She fell dangerously ill, and her physician deeming it expedient for her safety to try the effect of a sea-voyage, she at once expressed a wish to visit Baltimore, where she was confident of meeting with the tenderest care from Mother Seton. The arrangements were accordingly made, and her sister Harriet, already mentioned, who had been her constant nurse and was nearest to her heart, was appointed, among other attendants, to accompany her, to share her sufferings, and in all probability to receive her last sigh. On the 12th of June they landed at Baltimore, Miss Cecilia's symptoms having grown much less favorable than at her setting out from New York. But she was now in the arms of one whom she delighted to call her sister, her friend, her mother;

and it would be difficult to describe the joy of these devoted beings in meeting each other again. Miss Cecilia's attendants having remained with her a few days, returned to New York, with the exception of her sister Harriet, who had intended also to return, but was compelled to stay with her beloved and suffering relative in consequence of her disease becoming still more alarming. In this state of things the physicians who attended her in Baltimore advised a jaunt into the country; and it was immediately determined that Mother Seton should accompany her to the mountains of Emmottsburg, the site of her contemplated institution. As soon as the necessary arrangements could be made, she, with her two sisters-in-law, her oldest daughter, and Sister Maria Murphy, left Baltimore in a coach, on the feast of St. Aloysius, 21st of June, and on the following day the party arrived at Emmottsburg.* The house on the land belonging to the sisterhood not being as yet habitable, the Rev. Mr. Dubois, President of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, kindly offered them the log-house on the mountain, a little above the seminary, and paid them all that attention and hospitable care for which he was proverbial.† A few days

* Among the papers of Mother Seton we find the following note of the journey to Emmottsburg, which shows that, although the ladies travelled a great portion of the way on foot, they preceded with light and joyful hearts. "We were obliged to walk the horses all the way, and have walked ourselves—all except Cecilia—nearly half the time; this morning four miles and a half before breakfast. The dear patient was greatly amused at the procession, and all the natives astonished as we went before the carriage. The dogs and pigs came out to meet us, and the geese stretched their necks in mute demand, to know if we were any of their sort, to which we gave assent." In this happy description we have an illustration of that wonderful cheerfulness for which Mother Seton was remarkable.

† At this time Mr. Dubois had vacated the log-house on the hill, and removed to the buildings at the foot of the mountain, provided for the seminary.

after, the two younger daughters of Mother Seton joined her at the mountain cot,—an humble dwelling indeed, but holy and venerable in the remembrance of all who beheld it adorned with the beauty of every virtue.

Measures were immediately taken to put the farm-house on the property of the sisterhood in a fit condition to be occupied. In the mean time Miss Cecilia Seton recovered her health, at least temporarily, and began to enjoy the facilities which that favored spot afforded for innocent relaxation and pious contemplation. As soon as her strength permitted it, she would sally forth, in the company of Mother Seton and her sister Harriet, to ramble in the woods that led to the heights of the mountain, enjoying equally the pure and invigorating air and the beautiful prospect of the romantic country around. On other occasions, she would accompany Mother Seton and her children to the little church, situated above them on the hill, to offer the morning or evening adoration, or to assist at the holy sacrifice of mass. Her sister Harriet, however, not being a Catholic, never followed them into the chapel, but either walked in the woods or seated herself on a rock in front of the church, musing within herself, and desiring to be with her companions in the holy place. One evening in July, when the sun was about to sink behind the tops of the trees that cover the summit of the mountain, and every thing in nature was lovely, Miss Harriet looked on every side, her soul feasting upon the beauty of the scene. Still, a sad depression stole over her mind. She saw the little band ascend the steps of the chapel and the door close after them, while she remained alone, as it were, an outcast from God's holy temple. Sinking at the foot of a tree, she was overpowered by her feelings. The tears coursed down her cheeks, and her soul became the theatre of the most conflicting emotions. Mother Seton, on returning from the church, finding her in this state of de-

jection, inquired the cause of her distress. At first no reply was given; but, on being pressed to explain her grief, she exclaimed, "Why, oh why cannot I go into the church with you all?" "And why not," replied Mother Seton, "if you wish it? If you cannot perceive the sweetness of His presence as we do, at least you might say your prayers." Rejoiced by this encouraging answer, she ever after accompanied her friends to the chapel, and was a pattern of recollection and devotion. She often remarked, speaking of the moment of the elevation, that "she thought she could not feel a more awful impression if our adored Lord was really before her on his clouds of majesty." At length, on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, knowing that the divine sacrifice was offered for her both in Baltimore and at the Mountain, and seeing her sister Cecilia, Mother Seton and her daughter Annina, all before her at the heavenly banquet, her heart was overpowered; yet it struggled on in the conflict between nature and grace until, between ten and eleven o'clock at night, "stealing up to the church by the light of a full moon, in deepest silence, her arms crossed upon her breast, and the moon's reflection full on her pale but celestial countenance, I saw," says Mother Seton, who describes the circumstance, "the falling tears of love and adoration, while we said, first the *Miserere* and then the *Te Deum*, which from her childhood had been our family prayers. Descending the mountain, she burst forth the full heart:—"It is done, my sister; I am a Catholic: the cross of our dearest Lord is the desire of my soul: I will never rest till he is mine." Mother Seton, well aware of what she would be compelled to endure on her return, (for she had formed an engagement that made a return obligatory,) represented to her the consequences of the step she meditated, in order to prepare her heart for a full and perfect sacrifice. "Yes," she replied, "I have examined all this in my own mind. I have

weighed well the consequences; and the engagement I have made I will keep, if, as a Catholic, I am received by those dear friends to whom I am sincerely attached; but I cannot remain a Protestant; and if, as a Catholic, I am rejected even by this dear one, (showing the miniature of him whom she had promised to marry,) I MUST SAVE MY SOUL."

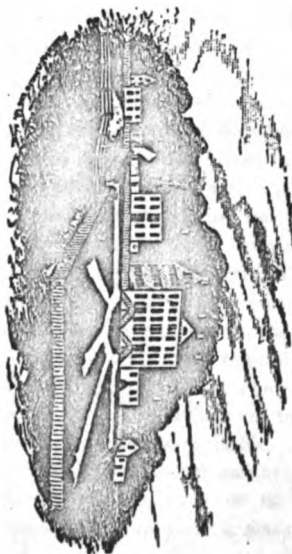
If nothing more of interest had occurred during Mother Seton's brief sojourn on the Mount than this happy change in the religious sentiments of her beloved relative, this would have been amply sufficient to render it an ever memorable period. She remained there only till the end of July; but, in the few weeks that she passed in that holy and secluded spot, a triumph of grace had been achieved which afforded her another source of abundant consolation amid the trials to which her faith had subjected her.

BOOK VII.

Mother Seton and her companions remove to St. Joseph's Valley—The conventual house—Elements of the sisterhood—Design of the institute—Its rules—First retreat—Councils of the Superior—Discipline enforced—Employment of the sisters—Privations—Miss Harriet Seton—Her fervent piety and death—Sympathy for Mother Seton—The community move to a new building—School commenced—Illness and death of Cecilia Seton—Condition of the institution—Visit of Bishop Cheverus—Rev. John B. David—Second retreat—Correspondence between Mother Seton and Mr. Filicchi—Her gratitude—Efforts for the permanency of the house.

WHILE Mother Seton was enjoying the hospitality of Rev. Mr. Dubois in the little cot above the seminary, the house on the newly-purchased property, destined for St. Joseph's

ST. JOSEPH'S ACADEMY IN 1826.



The small buildings to the left of it were the only ones in existence at the death of Mother Seton, January 4, 1821. The buildings to the right of it were built after her death, in 1826.

community, had undergone the necessary repairs to make it habitable. The arrangements having been completed, she removed thither on the 30th of July, accompanied by her three daughters, her two sisters-in-law, and three members of her community, two of whom were from the immediate neighborhood. On the same day, the other portion of the sisterhood who had been left in Baltimore started for Emmetsburg, agreeably to the directions of Mother Seton. The travelling party consisted of nine persons, among whom were her two sons; and they performed the journey in a wagon, which, with the quantity of furniture and baggage it contained, afforded no great convenience as a mode of conveyance; but the anticipation of their happy home in St. Joseph's Valley awakened among the sisters a lively joy, which was equally shared by their companions. On the feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, they reached Emmetsburg, and were received with a most affectionate welcome by Mother Seton and those around her in the little dwelling where the contemplated society was to continue its humble beginnings. To any but those who had entered upon a life of sacrifice and penance for God's sake, the community-house would have appeared insupportable. It was a small tenement, as we have already stated, consisting of one story and a garret, having only two rooms on each floor. Here were crowded together sixteen persons, many of whom had been reared amid the comforts of life, and all of whom had been better situated in the world; but, as the saintly leader of this generous band of women afterward observed, the daily offering of the holy sacrifice, and the happiness of possessing the Blessed Sacrament, in a little closet just wide enough to hold a small altar, made many things convenient which otherwise could not have been borne. At this period the sisters were ten in number, including Mother Seton, who could not have been aided by more competent subjects

to carry out the design which she then contemplated.* All were full of zeal for the new undertaking, and animated with an ardent desire of consecrating themselves to God in the service of their neighbor; while some were particularly qualified by their education for the mental culture of youth, and others had a special capacity for conducting the equally important matters of the household department, which at that time imposed no small degree of labor upon the sisters. Among them also were those whose peculiar attraction was to cultivate the interior life, while others evinced a more marked disposition for the active offices of charity. Thus did Divine Providence, in laying the foundations of an institution which was to combine the sanctification and perfection of its members with the practice of the most exalted and diversified charity toward their fellow-beings, select the fittest materials for the execution of his design, and exhibit in the rising community every variety of talent and virtue that could place it on a solid footing. But, as nothing important, either in spiritual or temporal matters, can be accomplished by a numerous society without the observance of a certain order in their employments, rules were adopted for the community until such time as it would receive a more permanent organization. Mother Seton having determined, in conjunction with the ecclesiastical superiors, to form the institute upon that of the "Daughters of Charity," founded by St. Vincent of Paul, in France, measures were immediately taken to procure the constitution and rules of that society; and it was hoped at the same time that some of its members would visit this country, in order to aid the rising community of St.

* The following are the names of those who composed the sisterhood:—Mrs. Eliza A. Seton, Cecilia O'Conway, Maria Burke, Susan Cleary, Mary Ann Butler, Rose White, Catharine Mullen, Sarah Thompson, Ellen Thompson, Cecilia Seton.

Joseph's by their experience and example.* Another important object of attention was the erection of a more commodious residence for the sisters. The contracted space to which they were confined affording no conveniences for the different exercises of the house, workmen were soon employed to put up a log-building of sufficiently ample dimensions, and every effort was made to accomplish the undertaking with the utmost despatch. In the mean time the temporary regulations of the sisterhood were observed with as much exactitude as practicable under the circumstances. The sisters were directed to rise at five o'clock in the morning, and, after vocal and mental prayer until half-past six, they assisted at the holy sacrifice of mass, reciting the first part of the Rosary on their way to the chapel and the second on returning. After breakfast, at nine o'clock they made an act of adoration of the Sacred Heart, and attended to various employments until a quarter before twelve, when they devoted a few moments to examination of conscience, adoration, and reading of the New Testament. During dinner one of the community read a portion of the Holy Scriptures. After the recreation at two o'clock there was a reading from the Following of Christ, an adoration, and work until five; then visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and recitation of the third part of the Rosary. At supper the *Spiritual Combat* was read. After the recreation, at half-past eight o'clock, there was a spiritual reading, followed by prayers, when the community retired. These rules, while they contributed to the order and regularity of the house, presented to the sisters abundant means of sanctification. In order to inspire them with a lofty estimate of their holy vocation and with zeal in the performance of their duties, a spiritual retreat—the first of

* The Rt. Rev. Benedict J. Flaget, Bishop elect of Bardonia, who was then about to embark for France, was commissioned to obtain the rules of St. Vincent.

the community—was opened on the 10th of August by the superior, the Rev. Mr. Dubourg, who in his daily instructions enforced the great truths of religion and the motives of Christian perfection, in that eloquent and impressive manner for which he was distinguished.

Besides the daily course of exercises prescribed to the sisters, they were directed to employ themselves in offices of charity, in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, according to the opportunities which Providence would supply. Among their spiritual duties, mental prayer was to be considered as holding the first rank, and the sisters were exhorted to perfect themselves as far as they could, with the help of divine grace, in this holy art of conversing with God; remembering that recollection and disengagement are the two principal dispositions required in those who wish to practise it successfully. After meditation, spiritual reading and examination of conscience were deemed of the greatest importance. Besides the reading in common, the sisters were directed to read something also in private, and to meet once a week for a conference on spiritual matters. In regard to the reception of holy communion, the superior makes the following judicious remarks, in a letter to Mother Seton, September 18, 1800:—"I have often reflected on the danger of frequent regular communions in a community. That danger must strike you as it does me. Repeat then very often to our daughters that the rule does not prescribe any number of communions in the week, but only restricts them to three, leaving it to the prudence of the director to permit whom he thinks fit to approach so frequently, or render communions more rare with certain individuals. Nothing should so often be inculcated as the dispositions necessary for very frequent communion, and the assurance that the superior will never judge of the merits of a sister from her approaching oftener or more seldom, but from the

fruit she derives from it. The extraordinary fourth communion in the week should be limited to the feasts of our Saviour and Blessed Lady, and three or four of the patrons, such as St. Joseph, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Aloysius, and St. Francis de Sales. This limitation will set a greater value on that favor and excite a greater devotion on those days." In the same communication Mr. Dubourg expresses his great satisfaction in hearing that a "generous competition to please God in their superiors reigned among all the sisters."

Charity, the queen of virtues, reigned supreme in this favored spot. All seemed united by one common aspiration, and aided each other in fulfilling the duties of their vocation. The sisters found ample employment in their spiritual and domestic affairs, in the instruction of youth and the care of the sick. The scholastic exercises demanded as yet but a small portion of their time, as the narrow space to which they were confined rendered it impossible to conduct a school, properly so called. The only class held at this time consisted of the two boarders who had followed Mother Seton from Baltimore, and her three daughters. But, independently of this, the sisters found sufficient scope for the exercise of their industry in the variety of domestic employments which a community necessarily presents, while their charity was called into requisition by several families in the vicinity that were afflicted with sickness. Even when her own house was filled with patients suffering from the fall fever, the zeal and charity of Mother Seton did not withhold from others the valuable services of her spiritual daughters. The Rev. Mr. Dubois, chaplain of the sisterhood, celebrated mass every day in its humble chapel; and on Sundays, after the early service at St. Joseph's, he officiated either in the village church or that on the mountain. It was customary for the sisters to attend this late service,—a

circumstance which contributed much to the honor of religion, by the edifying example which they displayed on their way to the church, reciting a part of the Rosary, and in the holy place assisting with piety and recollection at the divine office. They also rendered important assistance on such occasions, in decorating the sanctuary of religion and performing the duties of the choir. But there was another circumstance connected with their Sunday visits to the mountain, which deserves to be specially recorded. After the morning ceremony, they and the young ladies under their charge would assemble at a place called the "Grotto," whose associations are sacred in the recollection of all who ever frequented that interesting spot. The grotto was a romantic part of the mountain, a little above the seminary, where nature displayed itself in all its rude and picturesque beauty. Huge rocks, overgrown with moss, and projecting over a ravine where a crystal stream gurgled down the hill in the midst of dense foliage and wild flowers of various hues,—such were the attractions that had made it a favorite resort. Here, too, the hand of piety had planted the cross—the symbol of our redemption,—and erected the image of her who is justly styled the Help of Christians. Here would Mother Seton, before taking the simple repast with her little band, invoke the divine blessing, by reciting the "canticle of the three children;" and none that ever witnessed it could ever forget the tones of that voice and the fervor of that heart which, in the midst of the wild scenery of nature, called upon all creatures to bless and magnify their Creator.

Christian mortification was a characteristic feature of the sisterhood; and, from the description which Mother Seton has given of it, we may infer that its inmates had begun in earnest to labor at the work of their sanctification. "So earnest was every heart," she says, "that carrot-coffee, salt pork, and buttermilk, seemed yet too good a living." One

of the sisters who had lived in ease before her retirement from the world is thus spoken of in a letter written from St. Joseph's at this time:—"She is making fine progress in the paths of penance, and drinks carrot-coffee with as good a grace as if she had been used to mortification all her life, and takes dry bread at breakfast as if it was really her choice. Besides, her eloquent tongue has a continual embargo on it, except in recreation; and this is no small penance, you may suppose, to us all." The contracted residence of the sisters not allowing them to conduct a school which would afford the means of support, and the funds of the house being entirely absorbed by the purchase and improvement of the property, the revenue of the institution was not commensurate with the expenditure required for so numerous a family; and, owing to these circumstances, the community were at first reduced to a very destitute condition. For this reason, a beverage was manufactured from carrots, to supply the place of coffee, and was sweetened with molasses. The bread used by the sisters was made of rye, and of the coarsest description. "For many months," writes one of the community, "we were so reduced that we often did not know where the next day's meal would come from." On Christmas-day they considered themselves fortunate in having some smoked herrings for their dinner and a spoonful of molasses for each. But these privations, far from being unacceptable to the sisters, were welcomed as marks of the divine protection; and they vied with each other in making light of the inconveniences they had to suffer. Mother Seton, notwithstanding the difficulties to be encountered, seemed to be the more rejoiced that the Son of God found her community worthy of sharing his cross. Often, in a kind of transport, she would exclaim, her arms extended toward heaven, "Oh, my sisters! let us love him: let us ever be ready for his holy will. He is our father. Oh, when we shall be

in our dear eternity, then we will know the value of suffering here below!" She never ceased to inculcate to her spiritual daughters the duty of sanctifying their souls, and thus preparing themselves for any good work in which it would please God to employ them; but, knowing well that they could become worthy instruments of the divine goodness only by an entire disengagement from themselves and the world, she endeavored, both by word and example, to inspire them with a sincere love for the cross of Christ. Nor were opportunities wanting for the generous practice of self-denial, as the preceding narrative shows and as will appear still more from the sequel.

But, in the midst of many trials, the community of St. Joseph's presented abundant sources of consolation, among which the admission of Miss Harriet Seton into the Catholic Church is deserving of particular notice. We have seen that this young lady, convinced of the truth, formed the generous resolution of embracing it, despite the formidable difficulties which such a step would naturally create on the part of her relatives and friends abroad. From the moment she resolved upon it, her whole aim was to prepare herself for a worthy reception of the sacraments. Every means of promoting her spiritual welfare was set to profit. She joined the sisters of St. Joseph's in all their exercises with a most cheerful grace, and united with them in the most common labors, bearing the hardships of their living as if she had always been accustomed to it. But, as the happy day approached on which she was to seal her consecration to the service of God by a first union with Jesus Christ in the sacrament of his love, her soul was filled with holy raptures, and the joy which she felt displayed itself visibly in her ardent zeal to adorn the altar for that blessed occasion. It was the festival of Our Lady of Mercy,—the 24th of September,—a day of heavenly delight to her

and of lively joy to the whole community, but particularly to Mother Seton. The following sentiments, which she penned on the same day, will better illustrate the state of her mind than any words of description. "Is it so, O my Jesus! source of all delight? Have I this day received you into my heart?—a thought too ecstatic; a thought replete with the purest, the most celestial happiness! Is it so? Jesus, my all, has condescended to enter my unworthy breast, to converse with me, to call me his own! He will no longer permit me to be a stray sheep; he has taken me on his shoulders, and carried me home to repose in peace on his divine bosom. Eternal praises and thanksgivings would come short of what I would wish to render to him for all his mercies in calling me to his holy Catholic Church, the only true faith. Oh, may this day of heavenly happiness be marked in heaven,—this day on which my fervent and firm resolutions to remain until death therein were sealed and signed by his precious body and blood! May I ever find in his adorable sacrament the same ardent desire, the same fervent wish, to be for eternity united to Jesus!"

To consolidate this happiness by setting to profit the opportunities which she enjoyed in the solitude of St. Joseph's Valley, she solicited from her friends in New York a further leave of absence than had at first been obtained. Her request, however, not being granted, she took occasion to urge it still more forcibly upon their favorable consideration. In a letter to a married sister, whom she viewed in the light of a mother, she says, "Your long-expected letter, my beloved mother, has at length arrived, but, with it, not, as I had fondly anticipated, a compliance with the wish I had recently expressed,—an intention, I thought, very far from displeasing or giving you the smallest pain, and one which, from the very particular and critical situation of our dear Cecilia's health, might naturally be expected. But,

with my usual sincerity on all occasions with you, I must, and feel it my most sacred duty to tell you that, since my absence from Greenhill,* that revolution of sentiment you in all probability feared—a fear of which no part of the family, I believe, were divested at the time of my leaving home—has already taken place. I have united myself to Cecilia by another tie, stronger than any that ever linked our hearts before,—the sacred tie of *religion*. A union of sentiment on this point, I feel very confident, will meet with many reproaches from all those so dear to my heart; but, after once experiencing the full conviction of having acted, not, as many may think, from the thoughtless caprice of the moment or under the influence of persuasion, but in conformity to the irresistible conviction of that monitor within which forcibly led me to the step I have taken, all that can or does follow will be insufficient to shake my firm resolution to adhere to it. My motives are known to God alone, in whose power only it is to develop the secret intentions of the heart. Under the existing causes, then, I think, combining all circumstances, you will consent to gratify my wish of remaining where I am. My affection and attachment for you can end but with my life. A happier day may come, when I shall have an opportunity of disclosing the extent of it." She then alludes to her matrimonial engagement with Dr. Barclay Bayley, and expresses her determination to fulfil it, provided his sentiments toward her be not altered by her conversion to Catholicity. "Should such a change, however, take place, I shall endeavor," she says, "to seek my peace and happiness where I cannot be disappointed."

We have placed this letter before the reader to show the invincible courage with which Miss Seton nerved herself

* The residence of her brother-in-law's family.

against every opposition to the step she had taken. Home and kindred, the favor of friends, the pleasures of the world,—all were accounted as nothing, so far as they conflicted with the one thing necessary—the salvation of her soul. She would rather be denounced in the company of true believers and endure the hardships and privations which the humble cot of St. Joseph's then imposed, than, at the sacrifice of her interior peace, shine in the gay circles of the world or taste of its fascinating but delusive joys. In this generous resolve she was doubly confirmed by the grace of that invigorating sacrament in which the Holy Ghost with his manifold gifts descends into the Christian soul. This happiness she enjoyed on the 20th of October, when Bishop Carroll honored St. Joseph's sisterhood with a first visit and administered the holy rite of confirmation. Additional light and energy could not have been more opportunely imparted to this young and fervent convert; for no sooner did the intelligence of her union with the Catholic Church reach New York than she became an object of censure and persecution, while no small share of the dreadful mischief was attributed to the "siren voice" of Mother Seton. The reproachful letters of her friends and the learned ones of controvertists were darted upon her; but, equally regardless of the imputations cast upon her sincerity and upon her wisdom, she only looked forward to the "supernal prize," striving, by a frequent approach of the sacraments and by exercising every mark of faithful souls, to prepare herself for the rewards of eternal life. She soon became ripe for heaven. During the autumn and winter of 1800, the sisterhood of St. Joseph's was severely tried by sickness as well as privation,—an event which the cautious observer easily anticipated. Bishop Carroll, writing to Mother Seton in the beginning of November, remarks:—"I cannot reflect with patience on your situation and that of your dear sisters for this winter: for Mr. Du-

bourgeois says you cannot go into your new house till the new year, and surely that is no time to remove. I hope and trust that, contrary to the appearance of your open and inconvenient house, you may not any of you get your deaths." Whether this circumstance contributed or not to the generation of disease, the sisterhood was for several months an infirmary. Among the patients was Mother Seton's eldest son, who, having been seized with a nervous fever, was sent to St. Joseph's, to be nursed under the immediate eye of his loving parent. But, with the scant accommodations of the house, it was next to impossible to provide the suffering boy with the conveniences which his situation required. Afterward he became so ill that the last rites of religion were administered to dispose him for a happy death. His decease being momentarily expected, the sisters were already preparing for the issue of such an event, and his aunt Harriet assisted in arranging the shroud: but it pleased God to restore the health of the child, and the shroud destined for him shortly after enclosed the earthly remains of her who had made it. While attending with unremitting care at the bedside of her invalid sister Cecilia, she was seized with a violent fever which soon brought her to the verge of the grave. Such were the amiable qualities and shining virtues of Miss Harriet Seton, that she had become endeared to every member of the community; but on the bed of sickness her eminent piety shone forth with a lustre which excited the admiration of all around her. When fever parched her burning lips, when the throbbings of the temple indicated the intense sufferings of the head, when insensible as it were to every thing else, speak but of God, of heaven, of eternity, and her sinking faculties seemed to revive. To the last she manifested a great confidence in the intercession of Mary, in whose honor she wore the holy scapular: but her devotion to the blessed sacrament of the altar was of the most lively

and ardent description. Since her first communion she had received weekly, and sometimes oftener, this bread of angels, and during her sickness it was a source of unspeakable joy to her heart. Even in the moments of delirium produced by inflammation of the brain, all her thoughts seemed to be engrossed by that divine object; and the last sign of remaining life and reason that she exhibited was an effort to join the sisters in a hymn at the benediction. She then sank into a stupor, from which she passed to the sleep of death on the 22d of December. The following day her precious remains were conveyed, amid the tears and prayers of her companions, to the silent woods, and deposited in the very spot which she herself had chosen. During the preceding summer, Mother Seton had one day invited the sisters to take a walk and select a place for a cemetery. Miss Harriet Seton accompanied them. Some designated one spot, some another; but the attention of Miss Seton was arrested by a large oak-tree before her, and, having an apple in her hand, she playfully throw it against the tree, saying, in a loud tone of voice, "This is my spot." Her words were predictive; in four months she reposed there, the "first-fruits of them who sleep" in St. Joseph's Valley.

Though the decease of her cherished sister was a severe trial to Mother Seton, she derived abundant consolation from her lively faith, which viewed the afflictions dispensed by the hand of God as evidences of his special favor and protection. She also found, in the particular interest manifested for her and those around her by the most pious and respectable ecclesiastics in the country, a support to her fortitude and increased encouragement to persevere in the path of Christian perfection. "As you are happy enough," writes the Rev. Anthony Kohlman, then in New York, "to take your many trials in that light in which the saints considered them, as great favors of your divine Bridegroom,—an, instead

of wavering at those repeated strokes, you feel your courage increased, your confidence strengthened, and your love to God more and more inflamed,—we have great reason to admire and praise the amiable conduct of the Almighty, who, as holy Job says, tries his faithful servants so admirably. In the eyes of the unwise they seem to be afflicted unto death, while their souls are in peace and abounding with consolation. If the sudden departure of Harriet filled us with grief, my joy, I must confess, was no less in considering that happy state of fervor and love in which Jesus called this his beloved spouse to his eternal embrace." January 17, 1810. "What a happy death!" exclaims the Rev. Mr. Cheverus, alluding to the same event: "may my last end be like hers! Our penance is to be appreciated rather by its fervor than by the length of time. She who 'loved much' became in a moment a saint and the friend of Jesus. . . . I look upon your trials, difficulties, &c. as the stamp of divine favor and protection upon your establishment. Remember St. Theresa, St. Frances Chantal, &c. Like them, I hope you will become saints, and the mothers of many saints." January 24, 1810. Mother Seton received letters of a similar import from Bishop Carroll and other members of the clergy; but that of Rev. John B. David, who had then become officially connected with the sisterhood in the capacity of ecclesiastical superior, deserves special notice, as well on this account as for the solid and excellent advice which it contains. "Crosses, privations, and afflictions, seem to be the lot which our blessed Lord has apportioned for your soul. Courage, my dear mother! these are the precious jewels with which the Divine Spouse is pleased to adorn his bride. They are the most valuable earnest of his love and the sweet pledges of his future liberalities. Our dear Harriet is not dead, but lives to her God. In lamenting her loss for me, I cannot forbear looking upon her death as a happy

event for herself. From what storms and dangers is she not delivered! Perhaps God foresaw that, if she had lived, the persecutions and allUREMENTS of a wicked world would have shaken her constancy and caused her to forsake her good resolutions. Let us adore the unsearchable, but always wise and merciful, ways of Providence; and let us more than ever convince ourselves that Jesus wishes to be the sole possessor of our hearts, and would have his spouse above all others to abandon themselves with perfect resignation into his hands, casting away all anxious cares, leaving entirely to him the choice of the good or evils that are to befall them, with a total abnegation of their own interest and a full reliance on the care of his providence, having no other thought, in troublesome and painful encounters, than to submit lovingly to whatever God will be pleased to ordain. The soul in this state of resignation fears neither sickness nor poverty, desires neither health nor riches, but simply applies to the service of her Master, according to this word of our Lord to a beloved spouse of his: 'Take care of me and I will of thee.' How precious are the fruits of this resignation! It makes the soul the dwelling of peace, joy, and liberty, which are the true fruits of the Divine Spirit." December 28, 1800. Such were the excellent maxims which Mother Seton adopted for the regulation of her sentiments and actions. Submission to the holy will of God was constantly on her lips and in her heart; and, in the numerous and severe trials which she had to contend with, she found perpetual occasions for the practice and cultivation of this necessary virtue.

The new house which had been undertaken for the more convenient location of the sisters having been sufficiently advanced to allow them to occupy at least a part of it, they removed thither on the 20th of February, 1810. It was a log-building, two stories high, fronting to the south, and having the main entrance equidistant from the two ends

At the eastern extremity a small kitchen was attached to it, and on the west was another addition for the purpose of a sanctuary, sacristy, and an apartment where strangers could assist at mass, facing one end of the sanctuary. The choir, where the community heard mass and performed other devotions, was immediately in front of the altar, and by means of a folding-door could be united with or separated from it as the occasion required. The blessed Sacrament was conveyed from its former locality to its more worthy but humble receptacle, with all the solemnity which circumstances permitted, the Rev. Mr. Dubois officiating, and the sisters walking in procession, with hearts joyfully uplifted to God, who was leading them another step in their way to usefulness. The newly-constructed sanctuary could boast of no rich decorations; but there was a beauty of virtue and a fragrance of devotion that adorned its precincts and made it lovely in the eyes of the Almighty. "So poor was the little altar," says a cotemporary witness, "that its chief ornaments were a framed portrait of our dear Redeemer, which Mother had brought with her from New York, her own little silver candlesticks, some wild laurel, paper flowers, &c.: yet, what a happy, happy company, far from the busy, bustling scenes of a miserable, faithless world!" In front of the altar were inscribed those significant words of our Saviour:—"This is my command, that you love one another." The sisters, being now provided with the necessary accommodations for the commencement of a day-school, opened a course of instructions on the 22d of February, many pupils having been received from the village and surrounding country. In the education of youth they were directed by the superiors to aim chiefly at the inculcation of piety and sound morals, though secular learning was not to be neglected. We have seen that Mother Seton had placed her community in a special manner under the patronage of St. Joseph, the patron

of those who are charged with the care and instruction of youth. For this reason she desired that, in commencing the duties of the sisterhood in the new residence, the more solemn invocation of the divine blessing upon the undertaking should take place under his auspices; and accordingly the first high mass chanted in the large chapel was celebrated on this festival, the 10th of March, 1810.

But her attention to the details of the institution was soon divided by the increasing illness of her sister-in-law Cecilia, whose health had but temporarily improved since her arrival in the vicinity of Emmettsburg. This heroic young lady, who had exhibited in her conversion a piety, wisdom, and intrepidity seldom equalled in maturer years, had always ardently desired to embrace a life of religious seclusion, and when Providence afforded her an opportunity of joining Mother Seton, she was determined to remain with her, expecting, as she said, "not a life of ease and pleasure, but a life of penance and humiliation."

Her anticipations were fully realized; for the poverty of the institution to which she had attached herself, with her continual sufferings, afforded her constant occasions for the practice of Christian self-denial. The following sentiments which she wrote in several letters to one of her spiritual directors, only a short time before her death, will exhibit a true picture of her soul.

"February 1, 1810.

"This day, my dearest father, I am filled with the idea that I shall not see the end of this month. They tell me I am recovering: I think the remainder of my exile will be very short,—blessed be God!—yet, strange to tell, I am melancholy and sad. I long for the moment when this mortal part shall be dissolved, and the soul will rest in the bosom of its God. Yet I fear the approaching moment. Why is it so? Because I know judgment must follow

death. If the saints themselves so much feared the tribunal, what must *I* do? You will tell me, they confided in the mercy of their God. Oh, was it not for the confidence with which my Jesus inspires me, what would become of me? Oftentimes I behold nothing but darkness and gloom before me; 'tis then that the soul clings close to our Adored—more closely than ever."

"March 1.

"The month of February past, and my tottering frame still stands; but whence this change? With a cheerful heart I feel myself every day got weaker, and feel happy in the idea that a few weeks must end it all. What now is all the world to me? It vanishes like smoke. Night or day, sunshine or rain—'tis all one to me. My eyes are fixed on the eternal day; pain has become my rest, and my nights never more sweetly passed than when restless and uneasy. Dearest Lord! how good you are to me; you have indeed heard my prayer—always to let me suffer for you, that so I may expiate my offences; and when the hour of death shall come I may pass immediately from this world into thy arms of mercy. Oh, how precious now is every hour of my time! Not an instant shall be lost. Every thought, word, and action, shall tend to the one point. And how ungrateful I should be to my merciful Creator did I not devote to him, to the uttermost of my power, the short remainder of my life, which, most probably, will be but a few weeks longer!

"Since the last accounts to my dearest Father, the soul has tasted more peace than it has since our darling Harriet has gone. Death has no longer a frightful appearance. I can now meditate on it with the greatest composure; my daily pains I feel hourly more precious, though sometimes I get wearied, and even wish to be released; yet I find, in my severest pains, that I fervently pray our Lord to give me still more, and purify and prepare me for himself. I can-

not help thinking, from the nature of my complaint, that I am fast approaching toward the end of my exile; the pilgrimage has been wearisome, the mountain very hard to climb these few months past, which only makes me long more ardently for the haven of rest. But shall I ever reach that port? May there not be some sins yet unexpiated? If so, I trust our Jesus will shed a ray of his divine light in my unworthy bosom. Before the arrival of that hour doubts and fears will arise; but Jesus speaks peace and comfort. I cannot express to my soul's Father my longing desires for the Holy Communion. I receive as often as the sisters, but I seem to desire still more; and days that I do not receive him I am not the same creature. I have much more comfort in my communions than formerly. According to our necessities he gives. Death and eternity over before me! Why is it so? Because thou, dearest Lord, givest me some pain, some bodily uneasiness, to remind me of the slowness of that thread which holds my existence. Was it always so? Once you saw my weakness, and pitied it. You have made me see, dear Lord, the vanity of all human things. I now truly feel this life a weary pilgrimage, and long for the hour when my mortal part shall be dissolved and I shall be at rest. Cut and crucify this sinful body here; here let it pay the penalty that is due; but oh, my Jesus, spare me hereafter!—at the hour of death comfort and receive me!"

In the second week of April, by the recommendation of the physicians, sister Cecilia Seton was conveyed to Baltimore by Mother Seton, accompanied by her eldest daughter and one of the community. It was thought that a change of air and better opportunities of medical advice might prove beneficial; but, toward the end of the month, she calmly yielded her soul into the hands of God, the admiration of all who knew her, for the many brilliant virtues and

amiable qualities which she possessed. Her remains were conducted by a procession of the clergy, followed by a numerous concourse of persons, to the chapel of St. Mary's Seminary, where a solemn mass of requiem was celebrated for her repose; and, after the ceremony, Mother Seton, with the Rev. Mr. Cloriviere and the sister who had accompanied her to Baltimore, set out immediately for Emmettsburg, to convey the body of her beloved relative to its final resting-place in St. Joseph's Valley. It was deposited in that lonely spot on the 30th of the month. If nature grieved at the loss of one so dearly cherished, faith rejoiced at the happy event. The death of her two sisters-in-law, who were as the dearer part of Mother Seton's existence, became for her a source of holy joy; inasmuch as she saw them sheltered from many dangers that would have been unavoidable in their situation, if they had been obliged to return among their kindred, or even had they remained with her to pass through the trials of perseverance to which they would have been subjected. She thus speaks of them in writing to a Protestant friend:—"Dearest Harriet and my angel Cecil sleep in the wood close beside me. The children, and many of our good sisters, to whom they were much attached, have planted their graves with wild-flowers, and the little enclosure which contains them is the dearest spot to me on earth. I do not miss them half as much as you would think, as, according to my *mad notions*, it seems as if they are always around me. At all events, separation will not be long."

Vastly different were the sentiments which the departure of these two young ladies in the bloom of life awakened among some of their anti-Catholic friends. For them it was a sore vexation, and, in consequence, they visited Mother Seton with expressions of the strongest indignation. According to them she was "the pest of society," a

"hypocrite and bigot," because she would not, like them, set the tyrant over the consciences of others: but all this, as she observed to a friend, was "music to the spirit longing only to be conformed to Him who was despised and rejected by men."

Released from her attendance upon the sick, Mother Seton applied herself unremittingly to the duties of the opening school and of the spiritual community under her charge. On the 14th of May, the first boarding-pupils were received from Frederick county, five in number, and were soon followed by others. In June, the total number of scholars at St. Joseph's was forty, and before the close of the year the boarders alone had increased to thirty. The institution, however, according to its original design, was intended rather for the benefit of the poorer class than for the education of the rich; but the indebtedness of the house, and the want of an adequate support, rendered the admission of the latter unavoidable. Aided by excellent tutoresses, Mother Seton confined herself principally to a general superintendence of the school, particularly as her feeble health did not permit her to assume any laborious duty. Her part was to visit the classes, to exercise the talent of smiling and caressing, to give the look of encouragement or reproof, and in this way to inspire both the pupils and their mistresses with a cheerful zeal in the performance of their respective duties. The applications for admissions into the sisterhood were also frequent, and, with the prospects of the school, gave reason to believe that the divine blessing would continue to attend the institution. Mother Seton thus alludes to the condition of the house toward the end of May, 1810. After mentioning some of the difficulties she had encountered in the beginning, she says:—"You know the enemy of all good will of course make his endeavors to destroy it; but it seems our Adored in, determined on its full success,

by the excellent subjects he has placed in it. We are now twelve, and as many again are waiting for admission. I have a very, very large school to superintend every day, and the entire charge of the religious instruction of all the country round. All apply to the Sisters of Charity, who are night and day devoted to the sick and the ignorant. Our blessed Bishop intends removing a detachment of us to Baltimore, to perform the same duties there. We have here a very good house though a log building, and it will be the mother-house and retreat in all cases, as a portion of the sisterhood will always remain in it, to keep the spinning, weaving, knitting, and school for country-people, regularly progressing. Our blessed Bishop is so fond of our establishment that it seems to be the darling part of his charge; and this consoles me for every difficulty or embarrassment. All the clergy in America support it by their prayers; and there is every hope that it is the seed of an immensity of future good. You must admire how our Lord should have chosen such a one as *I* to preside over it, but you know he loves to show his strength in weakness and his wisdom in the ignorant; his blessed name be adored forever! It is in the humble, poor, and helpless he delights to number his greatest mercies and set them as marks to encourage poor sinners."

Though Mother Seton deemed herself unworthy of the station which she filled, the rapid progress of her institution proved that she was fully adequate to the office that had been assigned her. During the years 1810 and 1811 several candidates applied for admission into the sisterhood, which steadily increased in numbers, while it continued to flourish in the fervent practice of the Christian virtues. Of these Mother Seton furnished a bright example. A spirit of mortification, love of holy poverty, strict fidelity to rules, recollection of mind, with a cheerful countenance,

shone conspicuously in all her actions. No one could visit St. Joseph's House without being edified by the zeal and regularity which prevailed there. Upon a visit which the Rt. Rev. Bishop Cheverus made to the valley in November, 1810, in company with Bishop Egan, of Philadelphia, he was sensibly affected by the spirit of fervor which he witnessed among the sisters. Writing to their Mother-Superior shortly after, he says, "The happy moments I have spent with you and them are present to my mind, and still more to my heart. I almost envy their happiness and yours. I hope their pious example has not been lost upon me." On the other hand, the truly religious spirit of St. Joseph's community was not less clearly manifested in the lively joy which the presence of those excellent prelates inspired. "I need not tell you," says Mother Seton, in a letter to Archbishop Carroll, "our consolation in receiving the blessed bishops, nor how many benedictions they poured upon us. We have been very sensible of this special favor." To Mother Seton the visit of Bishop Cheverus was a source of peculiar satisfaction; and the impressions which it awakened may be more easily imagined than described. He had been her friend and counsellor before and ever since her conversion; had aided her in various and important junctures by his wise instructions, and still maintained with her a correspondence in which he manifested the liveliest interest in the welfare of herself, her children, and her spiritual daughters. But this valued and venerated guide she had never seen until he presented himself at the sisterhood on the occasion just mentioned. "No sooner did he make himself known to her than she fell upon her knees, seized his hands, bathing them with her tears, and remained in that posture more than five minutes, without being able to articulate a word."⁽¹²⁾

• *Life of Cardinal Cheverus*, translated from the French by Robert M.
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At this time Mother Seton derived the most efficient aid from the wise direction of the Rev. John B. David, who, upon the resignation of Mr. Dubourg, had been appointed superior of St. Joseph's community. Mr. David was born near Angers, in France, in 1761, of pious parents, whose earnest efforts were directed to his religious education. Blessed from his early childhood with a disposition to piety, and endowed with excellent talents, he rapidly advanced in knowledge and virtue, and passed through his collegiate course among the Oratorians with distinguished success. Having embraced the ecclesiastical state, he studied theology in the seminary of Nantes, and afterward, when a deacon, he joined the society of St. Sulpitius. Upon his ordination to the priesthood, in 1785, he was employed by his superiors in the seminary of Angers, as a professor of philosophy, theology, and Scripture; but the institution having soon been closed by the revolutionary movements, Mr. David took shelter in a private family, where he lived retired for two years, and then sailed for the United States in the company of Rev. Messrs. Flagot and Badin, in 1793. During the voyage he applied himself to the study of the English language; for he made it a rule to be always employed in some useful occupation. Hence, on his arrival in this country, having some knowledge of English, he was at once appointed by Bishop Carroll to the charge of a mission in Maryland, where he labored for twelve years with great assiduity and success. He was the first to introduce among the faithful in the United States the salutary practice of spiritual retreats, and he found them most effectual means of reviving the spirit of piety among the members of his different congregations. In 1804, Bishop Carroll named him to a professorship in

Walsh, Philadelphia, 1841, p. 83. This work states, incorrectly, that Mrs. Seton had been in Philadelphia, and had established a hospital for the sick at Emmettsburg.

Georgetown College, which he filled with ability; and two years after, he was called to St. Mary's Seminary, in Baltimore, under the charge of the Sulpitians, to which body he belonged. Here he was laboriously occupied in various offices of the institution, and in the duties of the sacred ministry, when in the fall of 1800 he was appointed to superintend the spiritual concerns of the rising community in St. Joseph's Valley. For this office he was well qualified by his skill in the direction of souls and his zeal for the strict observance of discipline. Obedience and simplicity were points on which he insisted in a special manner in his instructions to the sisters. They were virtues in which he excelled himself, and which he was careful to impress upon all under his charge. The second retreat of the community, which commenced on the 8th of October, 1810, was conducted by him. At this time there were fifteen members in the sisterhood. The following direction, which he gave to Mother Seton, selected from the few fragments of his instructions that have been preserved, may still be read with profit, and will perhaps be interesting to those who now belong to the society. "I am sorry to hear of your being so much indisposed. Undoubtedly, Lent, though not very severe in these our wretched times, ought nevertheless to abate something of its rigors for those who are in your case. Your pastor and confessor will prescribe in his prudence what your situation requires, and I doubt not but that the love of penance will yield in our dear infirm sisters to the voice of obedience, for obedience is better than sacrifice. I much approve of the maxim that complaining is a sort of infidelity when it has for its principle impatience or an anxiety for relief. But, on the other side, obedience and sincerity require that infirm sisters, when asked about their state of health, should candidly declare what they suffer, neither adding through exaggeration, easily suggested by self-love to

excite commiseration, nor diminishing through a misconceived humility or modesty. I earnestly exhort you, dear Mother, to caution your daughters against a want of that sincerity, candor, simplicity, so much recommended to us in the gospel; and to remind them often that the true spirit of religion is a spirit of infancy, which knows no disguise. It must be a rule among the sisters that, whenever they are indisposed, they do not wait till they are asked, but go and declare it to their Mother, not by manner of complaint, but simply through prudence and obedience to the rule; and, when questioned, they ought also to answer in all simplicity and truth."—February 28, 1811. A few months after he had written this letter, St. Joseph's was deprived of the valuable services of Mr. David, in consequence of his determination to follow the Rt. Rev. Bishop Flaget, his old friend and companion, to his new field of labor. They set out for Kentucky in the spring of that year. Mother Seton having always relied for direction chiefly upon the wise counsels of Archbishop Carroll, she became still more the object of his paternal care now that another change in the government of St. Joseph's House had become necessary by the departure of Rev. Mr. David. She had maintained an uninterrupted correspondence with that venerable prelate, who evinced a most lively interest for the happiness of herself, her children, and her community. On this occasion he wrote to her assuring her of his continued solicitude and of his earnest attention to all that would be requisite for the "benefit and perfect contentment of herself and her interesting family." At this period, and until the appointment of another ecclesiastical superior, he assumed a more particular superintendence of her affairs, owing to circumstances that will be mentioned in the sequel.

With the income from the school and the occasional donations of persons friendly to the institution, St. Joseph's

House had so far advanced without embarrassment. As we have seen, Mr. Anthony Filicchi, of Leghorn, had no sooner heard of the institution undertaken by Mother Seton in Baltimore, than he contributed largely to the furtherance of it, directing her at the same time to draw without hesitation upon his agents for any additional aid she might require. An occasion soon presented itself for another appeal to his liberality. Rev. Nicholas Zocchi, an Italian clergyman, who was pastor of Taneytown and other places in Maryland, was about to visit Italy, and he requested Mother Seton to exchange a thousand dollars with him for a bill on her friend in Leghorn, which she readily did, having need of funds at the time; but, fearing lest she might have calculated too much upon his generosity, she thus expresses her apprehensions:—"It is almost useless to tell you that the New Yorkers have given me up altogether and entirely. . . . I find my name cannot be mentioned before them. . . . Does it hurt you that I press so hard on you and make no further application to them? Consider, how can I apply to them for means which would go to the support only of a religion and institution they abhor?"—while what is taken from you is promoting your greatest happiness in this world and bringing you nearer and nearer to the Adored in the next. But, again, let me repeat, if I have gone too far, stop me short forever, if you find it necessary, without fear of the least wound to the soul you love, which receives all from your hands as from that of our Lord, and, whenever they may be closed, will know that it is He who shuts them who uses all for his own glory as He pleases. I do not write your Filippo now, as this latter will serve to say all to both—except the fervency and attachment of my very soul to you in Christ. May he be blessed and praised forever! How great that attachment is, and with how much reason, can only be known by one who once was what I have been, and

can conceive how great the contrast of past and present is. This is understood by Him alone who gave you to me and us to you; for which, I trust, we will love, praise, and adore through eternity." Mother Seton had no need of apologizing for her appeal to Mr. Filicchi's continued liberality. The friendship of this truly Christian gentleman knew no bounds. He not only honored her draft upon him, but he urged her in the most pressing terms to repeat her demands in any other emergency that might arise. "Chase your diffidence away," said he; "speak to your brother the wants of a sister, and trust in the One who knows how to clothe and feed the birds of the air and make the grass of the earth to shine." The progress of St. Joseph's sisterhood, and the benefits that began already to accrue from it to society and religion, were a source of the most lively joy to the heart of Mr. Filicchi; for he could not but feel that, under God, he had been vastly instrumental in accomplishing this good work. In the establishment that had risen up at St. Joseph's he beheld the happy results of his own zeal and munificence, to which the Almighty had imparted a copious blessing. Such was the view of it which Mother Seton also entertained. In writing to him, she would say, "Pray for your own work, that it may be crowned at last." But no language can express the heartfelt gratitude with which she recalled the numerous and signal favors which she had received at the hands of the Messrs. Filicchi. She looked upon them as friends whose benefactions could never be sufficiently repaid. We might infer this from the portions of her letters already cited; but the following will show that her gratitude was of the most practical character, and that nothing was omitted on her part to draw an abundant blessing and reward upon those true friends who never wearied in well-doing.

June 24, 1811.

"My dear, a thousand times dear, Antonio, you cannot even guess my joy to hear once more of you and your most dear ones; that our Filippo, for whom so often the sighs and aspirations of regret and desire for his rest and repose have ascended, and so many communions of gratitude and affection have been offered, (fully convinced that he was no longer with you,) to hear not only that he is alive, but certainly recovering, and that neither of you are angry with the poor little sister or have thought of renouncing her. Oh, what true and heartfelt comfort and blessing is this, to compare with the many acts of resignation I have been constantly making, not only of your precious life in the dangers of your situation, but of that friendship and protection which is our only earthly possession. . . . Dearest and most generous of 'I hearts, *your* possessions will never, never fail. . . . If you have received no other letters than those you mention, you do not perhaps know of the happy conversion and subsequent death of our Harriet Seton. Cecilia's death Mr. Zocchi must have mentioned particularly. Harriet's was also every way consoling. I have them both lying close by our dwelling, and there say my *Te Deum* every evening. Oh, Antonio, could you and Filippo know half the blessing you have procured us all! My Anna now treads in their steps, and is an example of youth, beauty, and grace, internally and externally, which must be and is admired as a most striking blessing not only to her mother, but to many. My two little girls are very good, and know no other language or thoughts but of serving and loving our dear Lord—I do not mean in a religious life, which cannot be judged at their age, but of being His wherever they may be. The distant hope your letter gives that there is a possibility of your coming to this country is a light to my gloomy prospects for my poor children,—not for their temporal good: our

Lord knows I would never grieve to see them even beggars if they preserve and practise their faith;—but their prospect in the case of my death is as desolate as it can be, unless they are given up to their old friends, which would be almost their certain ruin of principle. I give all up, you may be sure, to Him who feeds the birds of heaven, as you say; but, in the weak and decaying state of my health, which is almost broken down, can I look at the five without the fears and forebodings of a mother, whose only thought or desire is for their eternity? Our blessed Cheverus seemed to have many hopes of them when he came to see us last winter, and encouraged me to believe he would do all he could for their protection. To him and your Filicchi hearts I commit them in this world. Our success in having obtained the confidence of so many respectable parents, who have committed the whole charge of their children to us, to the number of about fifty, besides poor children who have not means of education, has enabled us to get on very well without debt or embarrassment; and I hope our Adored has already done a great deal through our establishment. The reverend Superior of St. Mary's in Baltimore, who was our first director, has zealously endeavored to do a great deal more; but he did not find me as ready as converts generally are, as I had to include the consideration of my poor children in my religious character, which has greatly pleased and satisfied our blessed Cheverus and Archbishop Carroll, who is now more my protector than ever, more truly attached to us, and, finally, takes the superior charge of our house, which at first he had bestowed on another; so that every thing I do or act, even in points less material, is and will be solely directed by them. . . . Oh, Filicchi! how is the blessing you most love increased and increasing in our wooden land, as you used to call it! Blessed, a thousand times blessed, be His holy name forever! You direct your letter to Balt-

more, but we are fifty miles from it, in the midst of woods and mountains. If we had but the dear Christian children and their father and mother, it would be an earthly paradise to me. No wars or rumors of wars here, but fields ripe with harvest; the mountain church St. Mary's, the village church St. Joseph's, and our spacious log-house, containing a private chapel, (*our Adored always there*;) is all our riches, and old Bony would not covet them, though one of the most eloquent and elegant orators at the bar of New York wrote our poor Harriet, among other reasons why she should not listen "to the siren voice of her sister," that in a few years every Catholic building should be razed to the ground and our house shortly be pulled about our ears. That would be odd enough in the land of liberty. Will you tell your most honored brother that my prayers shall not now go beyond the grave for him, but will be equally constant? All the children go to communion once a month, except little Rebecca, (Annina once a week,) and, believe me, their mother's example and influence is not wanting to excite every devotion of gratitude and lively affection for their true and dearest friends and best of fathers, through whom they have received a real life and been brought to the light of everlasting life. Our whole family, sisters and all, make our cause their own; and many, many communions have been and will be offered for you both, by souls who have no hope of knowing you but in heaven. Eternity, eternity, my brother! Will I pass it with you? So much has been given which not only I never deserved, but have done every thing to provoke the adorable hand to withhold from me, that I even dare hope for *that*, that which I forever ask as the dearest, most desired favor. If I never write you again from this world, pray for me continually. If I am heard in the next, oh, Antonio, what would I not obtain for you, your Filippo,

and all yours! . . . May the blessings you bestow on us be rewarded to you a thousand times! Ever yours."

From the statements here made by Mother Seton, we learn that the institution under her charge continued to flourish and to produce the most precious fruits. Her children in the order of nature, her daughters at St. Joseph's and her two sons at the mountain college, were growing up in knowledge and piety; the pupils whose education was committed to her care were steadily increasing in number; her spiritual daughters were also rallying thickly around her, and the work of charity was done to the poor. Exteriorly St. Joseph's House was moving in a tide of usefulness, while internally it was the abode of peace and sanctity, and afforded a happiness which was unknown in the busy world. Mother Seton has thus depicted the blessings of her religious retirement, in a letter to a dear friend who was thinking of visiting the institution. "The very thought of your visiting gives a delight to us you can never imagine. The solitude of our mountains, the silence of Cecilia's and Harriet's graves, your skipping children over the woods, which in the spring are covered with wild-flowers they would gather for you at every step, the regularity of our house, which is very spacious, and in an end wing contains our dear, dear chapel, so neat and quiet, where dwells, as we believe,* night and day, you know *Who*; this is no dream of fancy, and only a small part of the reality of our blessing. You must be a witness to believe that, from Monday to Saturday, all is quiet, no violation of each other's tranquillity, each helping the other with a look of good-will which must indeed be seen to be believed. All the world would not have persuaded me if I had not proved it; so you may be incredulous till you come and see. We have no kind of society but our

* She was writing to a Protestant.

mountain pastor, who is a polished, simple, truly holy man, says mass for us at sunrise all the year round. If any one has a trouble, it is carried to him; they receive their consolation, and it is buried in silence."

The blessings, however, enjoyed by the inmates of St. Joseph's, and the usefulness of the institution, would not have been permanent without increased and strenuous exertions on the part of Mother Seton. The maintenance of the house found a provision in the income from the board and tuition of the pupils: but the debts contracted by the improvement of their property were yet to be liquidated, and threatened to place it in a very embarrassing position. In this situation of affairs, different plans were devised for the relief of the house, among which it was proposed that Mother Seton should make a tour through the country, and solicit aid from those who were friendly to the objects of the institution: but this scheme was eventually abandoned. Bishop Cheverus, writing to her on this subject, says, "I am much grieved at the troubles you are in, and the more so because I do not see how you will be extricated from them. Yourself to leave your house and travel to make collections, &c. does not appear to me an eligible plan, although it would procure me the happiness of seeing you in Boston; and, in the present situation of affairs, very little, I am afraid, would be collected. An application by a circular letter would hardly produce any thing, but at least it would not be attended with the same inconveniences as your personal attendance. . . . I am still in hopes that some pious and generous souls will give, or at least advance, the money you owe, and that your invaluable establishment will subsist and flourish." To avert the destruction of the institution, Mother Seton privately appealed to the liberality of friends, among whom General Robert G. Harper was conspicuous, both for the interest he manifested in the welfare of St. Joseph's House

and for the eminence of his position in society.* The following letter, addressed to him by Mother Seton, will serve to show the difficulties she had to contend with, and the eloquence of her pen in pleading the cause of religion and humanity:—"Will you permit the great distance between us to be forgotten for a moment, and suffer the force of those sentiments which your liberality and kindness to us have created to act without reserve in speaking to you on a subject I believe you think interesting? The promising and attainable perspective of establishing a house of plain and useful education, retired from the extravagance of the world, connected also with the view of providing nurses for the sick and poor, an abode of innocence and refuge of affliction, is, I fear, now disappearing under the pressure of debts contracted at its very foundation. Having received the pensions of our boarders in advance, and with them obliged not only to maintain ourselves, but also to discharge the endless demands of carpenters and workmen, we are reduced now to our credit, which is poor indeed. The credit of twenty poor women, who are capable only of earning their daily bread, is but a small stock, particularly when their flour-merchant, grocer, and butcher, are more already in advance than they are willing to afford. What is our resource? If we sell our house to pay our debts, we must severally return to our separate homes. Must it be so, or will a friendly hand assist us, become our guardian protector, plead our cause with the rich and powerful, serve the cause of humanity, and be a father to the poor? Would Mrs. Harper be interested for us, or is this an extravagant dream of female fancy? Oh, no! Mrs. Harper has a heart of pity; she has proved it unsolicited. If we were relieved but from a momentary cri-

* General Harper, son-in-law of Charles Carroll of Carrollton; was one of the most gifted orators of the American Bar. Some of his speeches have been published, in 3 vols. 8vo.

barrassment, her name would be blessed by future generations; for, so simple and unpretending is our object, we cannot fail of success if not crushed in our beginning. The Rev. Mr. Dubourg has exerted himself continually for us, and bestowed all he could personally give. From him we are to expect no more. What shall we do? How dare I ask you, dear sir, the question? But, if addressing it to you gives you a moment's displeasure, forgive; and, considering it as any other occurrence of life which is differently judged of according to the light in which it is viewed, then blot it out, and be assured, whatever may be your impression of it, it arose from a heart filled with the sentiment of your generosity and overflowing with gratitude and respect. . . . Dear Mrs. Harper, tell your sweet nieces to look at the price of a shawl or veil, and think of the poor family of St. Joseph's." December 28, 1811.

Happily for religion and society, the institution was rescued from its impending danger by the timely aid of its friends; and, though it had to struggle on amid difficulties and trials, it gradually became more and more consolidated, and an instrument of great and extensive good in the hands of Divine Providence.

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